

The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind: Religion in the novels of Hall Caine.

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*To Wendy Thirkettle and the
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their patience, help and support*

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List of Abbreviations

Novels and other works by Hall Caine

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>TC</i> | <i>The Christian</i> |
| <i>TEC</i> | <i>The Eternal City</i> |
| <i>TM</i> | <i>The Manxman</i> |
| <i>TMOM</i> | <i>The Master of Man</i> |
| <i>TS</i> | <i>The Scapegoat</i> |
| <i>TWP</i> | <i>The White Prophet</i> |
| <i>TWTGM</i> | <i>The Woman Thou Gavest Me</i> |
| <i>WIWTWP</i> | Why I Wrote The White Prophet |

Other Novels

| | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>ACOTJ</i> | <i>A Child of the Jago</i> (Arthur Morrison) |
| <i>APOTG</i> | <i>A Princess of the Gutter</i> (Elizabeth Thomasina Meade) |
| <i>M</i> | <i>Manxland</i> (Bellanne Stowell) |
| <i>NB</i> | <i>Nina Balatka</i> (Anthony Trollope) |
| <i>SR</i> | <i>Stephen Remarx</i> (James Granville Adderley) |
| <i>T</i> | <i>Trilby</i> (George Du Maurier) |
| <i>TFOD</i> | <i>The Fishers of Derbyhaven</i> (Hesba Stretton) |
| <i>TMC</i> | <i>The Master Christian</i> (Marie Corelli) |
| <i>TSW</i> | <i>The Scarlet Woman</i> (Joseph Hocking) |
| <i>TTPTP</i> | <i>The Tragedy of the Pyramids</i> (Douglas Sladen) |
| <i>TTOTK</i> | <i>The Tragedy of the Korosko</i> (Arthur Conan Doyle) |

Abstract

Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine was a best-selling novelist active between 1885 and 1923. His novels were noted for their melodramatic plots, often involving love triangles, with affairs, adultery, extra-marital sex and infanticide. Several of his books sold more than a million copies, and most were adapted for the stage and screen, often by Caine himself, who was also a prolific dramatist. In addition, Caine worked as a journalist and enjoyed a brief political career. Despite his massive commercial success the novels are little read nowadays. Contemporary literary critics dismissed his plots as overly sensational and formulaic and there has been little subsequent in-depth commentary on his novels.

However, Caine should not be disregarded as a purely commercial writer of limited ability. He was a deeply religious man with extensive scriptural knowledge, who frequently drew inspiration for his novels from the Bible and viewed fiction as a vehicle for moral and religious instruction. He also used the novels to express his personal beliefs and to engage in specific religious debates.

Caine had family connections to the Isle of Man where he eventually settled permanently, and a highly significant archive of largely unexplored material is held at the Manx Museum. Investigation of this resource has enabled a detailed critical appraisal of Caine's approach to religion in his novels.

Each chapter of this thesis considers Caine's relationship to either a Christian denomination or major religion. The first chapter examines Nonconformity as a powerful formative influence on Caine's religiosity and on his view of fiction. In the second and third chapters, which deal with the Anglican Church and Roman Catholicism respectively, Caine confronts several religious issues of great interest to his contemporaries and with some relevance again in the twenty-first century. The final two chapters consider Caine's belief in the fundamental unity of all religions by examining his relationship with the Jewish and Islamic faiths.

Taken as a whole, this thesis reclaims Caine for a new readership and reminds us of the powerful role popular novels and drama once had in religious debate, and arguably still have. Caine is not always a likeable figure, certainly not a

straightforward one, but he is a striking character and, as such, deserves the consideration offered throughout this work

Introduction

Hall Caine (Figure 1) was born in Runcorn in 1853 and brought up in Liverpool. His paternal grandparents were Manx, and he took many childhood holidays at his grandmother's cottage at Ballaugh in the north of the Island, becoming familiar with the countryside, culture and people.

As a young man, Caine spent two years on the Isle of Man teaching at Maughold school (1870-72), where his uncle worked as a schoolmaster. On his return to Liverpool he resumed work as an architect's apprentice, following which he was employed as a draughtsman, and, at the same time, he became active in the Liverpool Notes and Queries Society.¹ Caine's literary career began in the early 1870s when he contributed articles to newspapers and periodicals including *The Builder* and *The Liverpool Mercury*. He also edited a volume of poetry, *Sonnets of Three Centuries: An Anthology* (1882). Caine's friendship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti led to a two-year period of residence with the poet and artist (1880-82), during which he acted as the poet's amanuensis. It was Rossetti who suggested that he make use of his Manx connections and heritage to provide a background for novel-writing. The pair had been discussing Caine's idea of setting a story in Cumberland, the birthplace of his maternal grandparents, when Rossetti said; 'Why not try your hand at a Manx story? "The Bard of Manxland" – it's worth something to be that'.²

Although his first Manx novel, *The Deemster* (1887) was not published until five years after Rossetti's death, Caine took his advice as the foundation for many of his most successful novels. Four of his novels are set entirely on the Isle of Man; *The Deemster*, *The Manxman* (1894), *The Master of Man* (1921) and *The Woman of Knockaloe* (1923). *The Bondman* (1890) has a Manx and Icelandic setting, whilst in *The Christian* (1897) and *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* (1913), the setting is split between the Isle of Man and other locations including London.

Caine moved to the Isle of Man permanently in 1893, and settled at Greeba Castle with his wife and two young sons. Between 1901 and 1908 he represented the constituency of Ramsey in the House of Keys, the Manx lower Parliamentary

¹ Vivien Allen, *Hall Caine: Portrait Of A Victorian Romancer* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp.31-32.

² Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *My Story* (1908; London: The Readers Library Publishing Company Ltd., n.d.), p.122.

chamber. He campaigned on a Socialist platform, advocating nationalisation of the Manx transport infrastructure and banks. Caine was interested in a wide variety of political and social issues – he supported the work of the West London Mission with fallen women and was strongly in favour of the establishment of a Jewish state. Alongside his lucrative novel writing career, Caine was a prolific playwright, producing successful stage or screen adaptations of several of his own novels. The stage versions of *The Deemster* (entitled *Ben-My Chree*), and *The Manxman* proved popular; both were produced by the well-known actor Wilson Barrett.³ ‘Theatrical versions’ of some novels were widely available. The *Daily Mail* produced an edition of *The Bondman* which readers could act out at home.⁴ A film version of *The Christian* appeared in 1915, followed by *The Deemster* and *The Woman Thou Gavest Me*.⁵ The trade paper of the British film industry, the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, noted that ‘in the preparation of these film versions [Caine] has taken a considerably closer and more active personal interest than has been shown by many authors in his place’.⁶ In 1929 Alfred Hitchcock directed a silent version of *The Manxman*, parts of which were filmed on the Isle of Man.⁷

Caine worked as a journalist, writing for the *Daily Telegraph* from the late 1890s until 1916.⁸ He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, including commentary on the proceedings of the Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, an article on boxing entitled ‘Is it right to fight?’, and a series of pieces dealing with the British occupation of Egypt.⁹ The latter appeared concurrently with the publication of his novel *The White Prophet*, which was set in Egypt. During the Great War he produced morale boosting articles which were published in a short volume; *The Drama of 365 Days: Scenes in the Great War*.¹⁰ In 1916 Lloyd George asked Caine to work with the National War Aims Committee which was ‘set up for the purpose of informing public opinion in regard to the issues at stake in the war’, requesting that he

³ C. Fred Kenyon, *Hall Caine: The Man and the Novelist* (London: Greening and Co., 1901), pp. 120-22.

⁴ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Bondman Play* (London: *The Daily Mail*, 1906).

⁵ Allen, p.360.

⁶ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 15 November 1917.

⁷ Allen, pp.414-15.

⁸ Allen, p.271.

⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 15, 18, 24 August 1910; 25 September 1911; August 1909.

¹⁰ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Drama of 365 Days: Scenes in the Great War* (London: William Heinemann, 1915).

make ‘as large a use as possible of the cinema in carrying on this work’ to produce a propaganda film for distribution nationally.¹¹ Caine was chosen for the task because of his experience in the field of cinema, as well as for his reputation as ‘a man of letters’.¹² In 1923 Caine’s final fictional work, *The Woman of Knockaloe*, was published, following which he concentrated on fulfilling a long-held ambition to complete a *Life of Christ*.¹³ In fact, Caine had been working on the *Life* intermittently over a thirty-year period. In 1892, he had announced his intention to write ‘a life of Jesus’ which he hoped would ‘prove his masterpiece’,¹⁴ but it remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1931. Shortly before his final illness Caine told his physician that he felt unable to complete the book.¹⁵ The manuscript ran to 3 million words and was eventually published in 1938 by Caine’s sons after extensive editing.¹⁶

Caine’s major literary achievements, however, were undoubtedly as a writer of fiction, and a bestselling one. By the late 1890s, with his popular reputation well established, his publisher William Heinemann, printed a record number of 50,000 copies for the first edition of his 1897 novel *The Christian*. This was superseded in 1901 when 100,000 copies of the first edition of *The Eternal City* went to press.¹⁷ British sales of *The Manxman* totalled nearly 400,000 and sales of *The Eternal City* (1901) more than 700,000.¹⁸ His novels were translated into many languages including Russian (Tolstoy and Gorky were admirers) and Finnish.¹⁹ When *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* was published in 1913, the publisher announced that it was to appear ‘as nearly as possible simultaneously’ in Bohemian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, Swedish and Italian whilst German, Hungarian, Japanese, Polish and Yiddish translations were also in preparation.²⁰

Caine may have been commercially successful, but his adherence to sensational and formulaic plots resulted in his critical credibility being constantly in

¹¹ Letter from Lloyd George to Hall Caine, dated 23 October 1917, reprinted in the *Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 1917.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Daily Graphic*, 30 July 1923.

¹⁴ *The Morning*, 24 August 1892; *The Bookbuyer*, New York November 1892.

¹⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 1931.

¹⁶ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 19 May 1933; *Daily Herald*, 7 October 1938.

¹⁷ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 14 August 1897; *The Sketch* 21 August 1901.

¹⁸ Samuel Norris, *Two Men of Manxland* (Douglas, Isle of Man: The Norris Modern Press, 1948), p.70.

¹⁹ Allen, pp.222, 268, 269.

²⁰ Publishers Note, opposite title page of *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lipincott Company, 1913); *Daily Express*, 1 August 1901.

question. The influential literary critic George Saintsbury ‘did not know that [he] had ever observed in any writer so close a hugging of one form of plot [...] as is the case with Hall Caine’.²¹ Saintsbury’s negative comments appear to have acted as a catalyst in highlighting the perceived weaknesses in Caine’s work. From then onwards the literary press tended to deliver mainly adverse critiques of Caine’s novels. Typically, T. P. O’Connor described *The Christian* as ‘pure melodrama’²² and the *Westminster Gazette*, known for its publication of short stories by leading literary figures, dismissed *The Eternal City* in similar terms.²³ The author Lewis Melville believed that *The Eternal City* was ‘dull’ and ‘melodrama incarnate’. After the ‘great vogue’ of *The Manxman*, Caine ‘had become impressed by his immense public and had endeavoured to be heard by his admirers’, and subsequently he had ‘written at the top of his voice’.²⁴

The colourful plots and moralistic tone of Caine’s novels also resulted in them falling out of favour, even with the general public, within a decade of his death and they are now rarely read. In the 1941 *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* George Sampson summarised a contemporary view of Caine’s work as follows: ‘The numerous novelistic melodramas of T.H. Hall Caine must be dismissed unnamed’.²⁵

However, my contention is that Caine, as he so often has been, should not be dismissed as a purely commercial writer of limited ability. He was a deeply religious individual, and it is that developing and sustained interest in religion, and the way Caine explored that interest in his fiction, which is the subject of this thesis.

Caine’s childhood experiences of religion on the Isle of Man were a strong formative influence, and unique for a writer of his status at that time. The Island was spared much of the sectarian strife common elsewhere in the British Isles. After the arrival of Methodism in the eighteenth century, it was normal practice for people to attend church in the morning and chapel in the evening.²⁶ Caine commented; ‘[...] never did

²¹George Saintsbury, ‘The Novels of Mr Hall Caine’, *Fortnightly Review*, February 1895, pp.180-96 (p.186).

²² T.P. O’Connor, ‘Books Worth Reading: “The Christian” by Hall Caine’, *The Graphic*, 14 August 1897, p.488.

²³ *The Westminster Gazette*, 22 August 1901.

²⁴ Lewis Melville, *English Illustrated Magazine*, May 1904, pp.212-15 (p.212).

²⁵ Cited in Norris, p.64.

²⁶ Robert H. Kinvig, *The Isle of Man: A Social, Cultural, and Political History*, (1944; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975).

Church and Dissent live on easier terms together' - indeed his uncle was simultaneously a class leader among the Primitive Methodists and a vicar's warden, without any conflict of interest.²⁷

Caine always identified Manx Methodism with the "Primitives" who formed the majority in many of the country parishes where his paternal grandmother and uncles resided. He admired their 'deep piety', 'sweet and simple faith', and the way the homely farmers and fishermen prayed 'with the fervour of saints, in language gathered from the "old book"'.²⁸ His memories of the 'rugged peasant preachers' at the Primitive open-air camp meetings, and the 'delirious emotion' incited in those listening²⁹, endowed him with a lifelong respect for overt displays of spirituality and religiosity.

However, Caine personally acknowledged that it was his father's religious restlessness which exerted the deepest influence. Later in his life, Caine described this in some detail. One of his key comments on this matter is worth reproducing in full here:

I rather think that my own upbringing put me in rather a favourable position for observing the spiritual brotherhood of mankind. I was born and baptised into the Established Church, and am therefore legally a Churchman; but my father, a strong Protestant, a man of little education but of immense brain power, thinking he could find no sufficient standing ground for his Protestantism in the Establishment, went over to Nonconformity, and so I became a Nonconformist. Then from Primitive Methodism to Wesleyan Methodism, and finally from Congregationalism and the community of Baptists, according as my father's restless intellect determined, I passed during my boyhood through nearly all the denominations. A rolling stone gathers no moss, and by the time I reached manhood I had, I trust, not ceased to be a Christian, but I had certainly ceased to be a sectarian. It was a shock to my father that I was not repelled by the extremest ritualism, and that I was actually

²⁷ *My Story*, p.29.

²⁸ *My Story*, p.27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

capable of sympathy with the Jews. By-and-by I began to go to the Catholic Church and to find my warmest friends among her clergy.³⁰

Caine viewed sectarianism as divisive and preferred to stress the common ground held by the various Christian denominations. When interviewed by *The Christian World* in 1892,³¹ he was asked for his views on ‘the union of Christendom’ and replied that ‘the divisions’ were ‘mean and paltry’. Unusually for his time, he argued that for any union of ‘God’s people’ to be complete, the two other Abrahamic religions – Judaism and Islam – should also be included. He wrote about ‘The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind’ and explained his belief that all religions were one, because ‘at the great and tragic moments of life and death the voice of the human soul is always the same’.³² However, one of the key questions that Caine’s comments raise is central to my discussion of Caine and religion in general - namely how these broad ecumenical and interfaith aspirations can be (and indeed *whether* they can be) embodied in particularized policy or practice.³³ Hand-in-hand with his antipathy towards sectarianism went a critical attitude towards institutionalised religion across all the Christian denominations, which he again extended to include Judaism and Islam. In his fiction, Caine returns again and again to the figure of the religious outsider, whose unorthodox individuality is used as both challenge and embodiment of religious ‘truth’ as it is found within the orthodoxy of the major religions and Christian denominations.

Caine drew much of the inspiration for his work from the Bible, and was proud of his extensive scriptural knowledge:

There is no book in the world like it, and the finest novels ever written fall far short in interest of any one of the stories it tells. Whatever strong situations I have in my books are not of my creation but are taken from the Bible³⁴.

In an 1895 interview with the journalist R. H. Sherard, Caine claimed that he knew his Bible ‘as few literary men know it’. Sherard himself commented; ‘Indeed, Ruskin said

³⁰ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, ‘Why I Wrote The White Prophet’ (London: Published privately for the author by Collier & Co., 2 Tudor Street, E.C., 1909).

³¹ *The Christian World*, 29 December 1892.

³² ‘The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind’, *The Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

³³ *The Christian World*, 29 December 1892.

³⁴ Robert Harbrough Sherard, ‘Hall Caine: A Biographical Study’, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, pp. 562-77 (p.14).

of Hall Caine that he knows it better than any living writer of fiction'.³⁵ Undoubtedly Caine's childhood experiences on the Isle of Man also played a role in his familiarity with the Scriptures – he recalled that although he was unsure as to whether she could read, his grandmother knew much of the Manx Bible 'by heart', and 'by the exercise of some unaccountable sense she could turn up a text at the proper page'.³⁶

Caine was writing at a time when, despite falling church attendance, Britain was still a predominantly Anglican country with a relatively high degree of religious consensus which included an implicit acceptance of Protestant Christianity.³⁷ What is certainly a feature of this period is how much popular fiction was used as a means of conveying broad religious truths. In addition, fiction was often used by preachers to add interest to and to make a moral point in sermons, Marie Corelli's description of the Resurrection was read from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey by the Dean on Easter Sunday,³⁸ and many of Caine's novels were popular subjects for well-attended church services. The Reverend Dr Horton preached about *The Christian* to 'a large congregation' at Lyndhurst Road Baptist Chapel in Hampstead,³⁹ and the Reverend Joseph Parker of the City Temple in London made reference to the novel, praising the 'zeal' of its central character.⁴⁰ A later novel, *The Prodigal Son* (1904) provided the inspiration for a Revival Service; the Reverend H. Mackintosh of Brockley Presbyterian Church in London is recorded as preaching a 'Special Sermon on "The Prodigal Son" – As drawn by Hall Caine and by Jesus Christ'. The congregation was advised to 'come early'.⁴¹

This trend for imaginative recreation of religious truths created its own problems – on occasions it was suggested that fiction was competing with, or even supplanting more serious religious issues, and by implication the Bible, as the following comment in *The Christian Commonwealth* indicates:

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *My Story*, p.20.

³⁷ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996), p.1.

³⁸ Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers & Reputation; Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918*, (2006; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.779.

³⁹ *The Daily Chronicle*, 4 October 1897.

⁴⁰ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 October 1897.

⁴¹ Undated poster publicising the service, folder of enclosures inserted in Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook 1 (1887-95).

A sermon on a new novel is not in these days altogether a novel sermon. Indeed, sermons are sometimes recklessly devoted to the consideration of all the miscellanies which distract us from the one thing needful.⁴²

Caine supported the use of fiction in sermons. In a letter to Pembroke Chapel in Liverpool he regretted his absence at a celebration held to mark the seventh anniversary of the Reverend Charles Aked's ministry. The Reverend Aked frequently based his sermons on popular fiction, including novels by Caine. *The Christian Commonwealth*⁴³ described him as 'one of the worst pulpit sinners' in this respect. However, Caine argued that it was only by using 'methods such as Mr. Aked has employed' that the pulpit could 'keep abreast of an age that now has so many other vehicles of expression', by paying attention to the affairs of this world and demonstrating that 'eternal issues are not obscured but illuminated when viewed in the light of present needs' and by supporting the 'need' of the novel reading public to hear religious truths interpreted in terms of popular fiction.⁴⁴

Such comments are indicative of Caine's elevated concept of the religious role of the novelist, and his belief that the authors of fiction had a moral duty to educate and uplift their readership. He took issue with the idea of the novel as being solely 'a light form of literature' with 'no moral responsibility whatever',⁴⁵ and considered that the reading public supported this view of fiction. Whilst seeking entertainment and diversion, they also looked for a sense of moral purpose, which Caine described as 'spiritual compensation':

We look around us and we see wrongdoing victorious and rightdoing in the dust; the evil man growing rich and dying in his bed and the poor man becoming poor and dying in the streets: and our hearts sink and we say, "What is God doing, after all, in this world of His children?" But our days are limited; we cannot watch the event long enough to see the end which Providence sees. Well, am I irreverent? The place of the great novelist, the great dramatist, Tolstoi, Hugo, Shakespeare – is that of providing a temporal Providence – to answer the craving of the human soul for compensation, to show us that

⁴² *The Christian Commonwealth*, 9 September 1897.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 September 1897.

⁴⁵ *The Critic*, New York, 17 November 1894.

success may be the worst failure, and failure the best success; that poverty may be better than riches. I count him the greatest man who teaches men that the world is ruled in righteousness.⁴⁶

Caine was not primarily interested in religious belief in the abstract sense. He traces religious issues by exploring them in his fiction, raising questions such as how non-sectarianism avoids becoming an alternative sect, whether individuals operating outside the organisational structures of conventional religions can produce meaningful and lasting reforms without challenging too directly the structure of social organization of religion, whether tolerance too easily drifts into meaninglessness, and whether a religion based on individuality can avoid infinite schism. All these religious tensions are vital animators of Caine's fiction.

Besides these broader questions, Caine also engaged in many of the more specific religious debates of his time: notably the role of the Churches in combating poverty, the controversy surrounding the Roman Catholic doctrines of papal infallibility, temporality and confession and Britain's treatment of the Muslim majority in Egypt. Caine always conducted extensive research into the background and content of his novels, visiting Rome, Egypt and the Sudan, reading widely and consulting recognised authorities. The result is a sensitive, nuanced and balanced analysis of the issues at stake, and my argument in this thesis is not simply that Caine successfully tapped into the late-Victorian market for fiction with a moral or religious purpose, but that his populism and commercial success do not preclude his being a writer with a firm and informed interest in religion.

Very little critical material has been published on Caine, and far less still on his relationship with religion. Two short biographies were published in 1901 and in 1948, neither of which provides any information relating to Caine's religious beliefs. C. Fred Kenyon's 1901 *Hall Caine: The Man and the Novelist* was published when Caine was forty-eight years old and provides a positive critique of his novels and plays to date.⁴⁷ Caine, along with the Manx poet T.E. Brown, is the subject of Samuel Norris's *Two Men of Manxland* (1948).⁴⁸ Norris was active in the Manx political reform movement and chooses to concentrate on a detailed description of Caine's

⁴⁶ *The New York Times*, 14 November 1895.

⁴⁷ Kenyon, pp.82-224.

⁴⁸ Norris, pp.77-302

involvement with Manx politics. However, he also devotes two chapters to Caine's novels, documenting the decline in his reputation (beginning with Saintsbury's criticism).

A 1997 biography by Vivien Allen, a South African journalist, is aimed at a general, non-academic readership and describes Caine's personal life, and his multiple careers as a novelist, dramatist and politician. It improves on Kenyon in that there is a more detailed commentary on the novels with plot summaries and character descriptions, but there are only brief references to religion. Although Allen mentions Caine's desire to see a union of the great monotheistic religions in very general terms, there is little detailed information about his religious beliefs.⁴⁹

More recent publications have been closely related to the current critical trend towards examining the commercial marketplace for fiction, and Caine's position as an author writing for the new mass market. Typical of these is a chapter in Mary Hammond's 2006 publication, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914*, which considers Caine's status in the literary field of the 1890s.⁵⁰ In particular, Hammond stresses Caine's attempts to establish himself as a man of letters by cultivating associations with literary figures such as Rossetti and Watts-Dunton, prior to his move to the publisher William Heinemann, which marked his departure from the 'world of letters' to the 'world of big sales', producing easy to read, inexpensive books.⁵¹

Phillip Waller's chapter on Caine in *Writers, Readers and Reputations* similarly concentrates, for the most part, on Caine's relationship to the mass market and documents his role in breaking the stranglehold of the circulating libraries and the three-volume novel.⁵² However, Waller does give some consideration to the reasons behind Caine's success, deciding at one point that the most important factor was his populist approach to religion with which the general reader could identify:

Too many writers were questioning and undermining traditional beliefs; they recoiled from reproducing the simple dramas of the past, about the honest and

⁴⁹ Allen, p.337.

⁵⁰ Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006).

⁵¹ Hammond, p.124.

⁵² Waller, p.765.

upright pitted against the legions of evil; the biblical story, in other words, uncluttered by recent criticisms relating to its historical truth, scientific basis, and complex theologies.⁵³

However, this is not explored further, and the main impression which Waller conveys of Caine is that of a self-publicist whose success owed more to factors such as his manipulation of the media, his cultivation of influential people and his ability to tap in to popular religiosity than it did to his 'intrinsic talent'.⁵⁴ Caine's non-sectarian and ecumenical beliefs are considered but not directly related to the content of specific novels. There is little indication of the importance of religion as a theme in Caine's writing and the fact that he treated religious issues of contemporary concern with anything like a nuanced or informed approach.⁵⁵

There has recently been what might appear to be the beginning of a critical interest in the relation between Caine's writing and fin de siècle religion in the work of Kristen Tetans. She has researched aspects of Caine's career as a dramatist focussing on his relationship with Henry Irving and the controversy surrounding the 1890 play *Mahomet*, in which Caine attempted to portray the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina. However, her observations are solely in relation to Caine's work as a dramatist and the late-Victorian theatrical context; she does not focus on his fiction.⁵⁶

This thesis is built not only from a study of Caine's published novels, but also from consideration of a highly significant body of unexplored primary material. The opening of Caine's archives in 2001 has provided an ideal opportunity for more detailed research into his life and work and, to a large degree, this thesis is an historical recovery. The archive is held in the Manx Museum, Douglas, and consists of 84 boxes containing manuscripts of Caine's novels and plays, letters from family, friends and business and literary associates along with legal documents. There are also 13 scrapbooks which were assembled by Caine's wife, Mary, between 1887 and 1931, including articles by and about Caine from the literary and popular press in Britain

⁵³ Waller, p.739.

⁵⁴ Waller, p.752.

⁵⁵ Waller, p.741.

⁵⁶ Kristen Tetans, 'The Lyceum and the Lord Chamberlain: The Case of Hall Caine's *Mahomet*' in *Henry Irving: A Re-Evaluation of the Pre-Eminent Victorian Actor-Manager*, ed. by Richard Foulkes (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp.49-63.

and further afield relating to all aspects of his career. Even though this material has been available for over fifteen years, it has been mostly ignored by academic researchers. Partly this is because it has proved difficult to exploit – initial plans to put the material on microfilm or digitalise it have not come to fruition, although the iMuseum in Douglas has converted many back issues of local newspapers. As a result, remote access is not possible. Furthermore, despite the significant efforts of mostly volunteer workers over a protracted period, cataloguing remains incomplete and is on a highly provisional basis. Manx National Heritage provide a list of the box contents with the caveat that this is ‘a work in progress’ and subject to change. I have discovered two much smaller archives at Rice University in Texas and Georgetown University, Washington D.C., but these have yielded very little of relevance to my work.

Taking full advantage of this untapped resource, my research has resulted in a unique and detailed critical appraisal of Caine’s approach to religion in his novels, ultimately demonstrating that he engages fully with the controversial religious (and many of the political) issues of his day. Each chapter of the thesis deals with Caine’s relationship to either a major Christian denomination, or a major religion. As one of Caine’s articles of faith is the potential interconnectedness of all religious impulse and experience, this approach allows both the parallels and the problems of this belief to surface, besides proving a clear picture of the sheer range of his religious interests. The first chapter examines Nonconformity, which exercised a strong influence on Caine’s religiosity from childhood, and contributed, I argue, to his later views of fiction as a vehicle for moral elevation. This is followed by a focus on Caine novels in which first the Anglican and then the Roman Catholic Church come under his scrutiny. The final chapters dealing with Judaism and Islam examine his portrayal of these individual faiths, but also consider his vision of a movement beyond Christian unity towards a ‘Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind’ in which the three Abrahamic religions would be united.

The Manxman (1894)⁵⁷ and *The Master of Man* (1921),⁵⁸ two of Caine’s Manx novels which reflect Caine’s religious ‘roots’ in Primitive Methodism, are considered in Chapter One. Although his parents eventually ‘settled’ as Baptists, Caine retained

⁵⁷ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Manxman* (1894; Napier, New Zealand: Caine Classics, 2000).

⁵⁸ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Master of Man* (London: William Heinemann, 1921).

an affinity with the Primitives, perhaps due to his childhood connection with the Isle of Man where Primitive Methodism had such a strong presence. The intense religiosity of that particular strand of the Christian faith exercised a powerful impact on the psyche of the young Caine as described in his autobiography. However, in adulthood the successful novelist found the Primitive disapproval of fiction to be narrow-minded, hence his more negative portrayal of Primitives later. In this chapter, we find some of the most personal discussions of the potential for fiction to elevate morality and promote religion. Caine as omniscient narrator acts as a ‘temporal providence’ ensuring atonement on both spiritual and material levels.⁵⁹

Chapter Two examines *The Christian* (1897),⁶⁰ in which Caine shifts his focus to the contemporary for the first time as he engages with a controversial issue of the 1890s; the role of churches in the relief of poverty with specific reference to the Anglican Church. Here, Caine provides one of his most sustained studies of the individualist religious outsider in the character of slum-priest John Storm, isolated from the Anglican hierarchy –a charismatic figure whose apocalyptic preaching gathers a large following who believe him to be possessed of divine attributes.

My third chapter deals with Caine’s 1901 novel *The Eternal City*,⁶¹ set in contemporary Rome and focussing on the Roman Catholic Church, where the Pontiff, eager to restore his temporal power, neglects his duty to the poor. However, the novel moves beyond exploring such issues at the individual level of a Christian Socialist slum priest to a more complex consideration of the application of Christian teaching to national government and international relations, with particular emphasis on the global role which the Roman Catholic Church might play. *The Eternal City* also examines areas of Roman Catholic doctrine which were controversial at the time Caine was writing: namely temporal power, papal infallibility and confession. In this Chapter I also compare Caine’s novel to *The Master Christian* (1900)⁶² by Marie Corelli, a work with a similar setting and themes. Both Caine and Corelli were writers who were viewed as very similar by contemporaries - popular, commercial, non-intellectual and moralistic. However close comparison of these two novels serves to draw into relief

⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, 14 November 1895.

⁶⁰ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Christian*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897).

⁶¹ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Eternal City* (London: William Heinemann, 1901).

⁶² Marie Corelli, *The Master Christian* (London: Methuen & Co., 3rd edition, 1900).

the sensitivity of Caine's attitude to Catholicism when compared with Corelli's almost vindictive attacks on all aspects of Catholic belief.

In Chapters Four and Five I explore Caine's treatment of Judaism and Islam. Chapter Four focuses on *The Scapegoat*,⁶³ which has a Jew named Israel ben Oriel as its central character. Although it is set in Morocco during the 1850s, the novel was written against a background of growing anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, and was acclaimed as a sympathetic portrayal of a Jewish character by Britain's Jewish community. Again, the central character is a religious 'outsider' and the plot revolves around his atonement for wrongdoing. In *The Scapegoat*, Caine sets out his belief in the fundamental unity of the Abrahamic religions through the character of Mohammed of Mequinez, a holy man who preaches a blend of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. This chapter also considers Caine's relationship with the Jewish community after *The Scapegoat*'s publication, which led him to a lifelong interest in, and support for, the Zionist cause

Finally, Caine returns to the contemporary setting of British-occupied Egypt and Sudan in *The White Prophet*.⁶⁴ The novel's central character is the Muslim Ishmael Ameer, a charismatic holy man who preaches a synergistic blend of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and who, like John Storm is credited with divine attributes by his followers. The novel, Caine's least commercially successful, proved controversial due to his perceived sympathy for Islam and his criticism of British rule in Egypt, in a setting where politics and religion are inextricably intertwined. Indeed, it can be argued that this reflects Caine's willingness to take commercial risks to express his religious and political beliefs in his fiction.

Thus, my research aims to provide a full consideration of the religious content, and context, of Caine's novels, reflecting the nature of his interest in all issues relating to religion – which, as I hope to make clear, was broad, varied, and involved - ranging from the duty of the Churches towards the poor to international anti-Semitism. My intention is that close reference to the novels, backed by and cross-matched with unexplored and extensive archival material from the Manx Museum, will improve

⁶³ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Scapegoat* (London: William Heinemann, 1891).

⁶⁴ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The White Prophet* (London: William Heinemann, 1909).

understanding of this neglected author and his work, and also of the broader relationship between popular fiction and religion at the turn of the twentieth century.

Chapter One

Morality Tales and Methodism.

The Manx - 'A People Strong in Nonconformity'¹

By the time Caine began his childhood visits to the Isle of Man in the late 1850s, the Island was a stronghold of Nonconformity. Ann Harrison's account of the history of Manx Methodism shows that prior to the arrival of Wesley in 1777, most of the population were predominantly Anglican, members of 'an all-embracing, monolithic church'.² However, when Wesley made his second visit in 1781 the conversion of the Island was well under way, and in 1805 the Isle of Man became a District of the Methodist Society.³ At the time of Wesley's death in 1791, the Isle of Man had the second largest membership in the list of circuits after London; 2,500 members compared with London's 2,950. In the 1820s Primitive Methodism arrived on the Island, introducing revivalism, women preachers and concern for the poor.⁴ Completed returns for the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census provide an indication of the strength of Nonconformity on the Island. The returns show the number of places of worship by denomination; the Church of England (32), Wesleyan Methodists (53), Primitive Methodists (23), Roman Catholics (4), Presbyterians (2), Independents (2) - an overall total of 116 buildings for a population of 52,387.⁵

The 1851 religious census also showed that in two of the Island's main towns, Douglas and Castletown, the combined number of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists was greater than the total number of Anglicans. The figures for Douglas, the Island's most populous town, were 45% and 40% respectively. In Castletown, 43% of churchgoers attended a Church of England service compared with 49% who attended a Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist chapel. The figures for Peel were 21% (Church of England) and 50% for the Methodist denominations.⁶ Statistics for 1862 showed a

¹ *My Story*, p.29.

² Ann Harrison, 'Religion in the Nineteenth Century', in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Vol. V, The Modern Period 1830-1999*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp.357-363 (p.357).

³ Harrison, p.358.

⁴ 'New Light on Methodism in the Isle of Man', in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. XIX, Part 8, (1938), 195-201 <<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/holder.htm>>

⁵ Harrison, p.361.

⁶ Francis Coakley, Tabulated Returns by Town Parish from an update of a paper delivered to Manx Methodist Historical Society AGM, Nov 1998 <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/rc1851/rc_tab.htm> accessed 6 October 2016.

continuing growth in Nonconformity; the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists had 91 chapels, with 35,000 sittings, 20 ministers and 200 local preachers.⁷

Multiple attendance at both church and chapel services was common throughout England in the 1830s. In Caine's novel, *A Son of Hagar* (1886), which is set in Cumberland during this period, a minor character, the Anglican vicar Parson Christian, is asked by his servant, a recent convert to Methodism, to preach at the meeting house and he agrees to do so without hesitation.⁸ However, on the Isle of Man, the practice of attendance at church and chapel persisted until much later. Many chapels chose the times of services to avoid clashes with services at the parish church.⁹ Caine remarked that Church and Dissent, or Nonconformity, were on good terms, recalling an uncle who was both a class leader among the Primitive Methodists and a vicar's warden during the 1870s. Caine could not remember any conflict of interest between the two.¹⁰

The historian R.H. Kinvig, writing in 1944, summed up the Island's position regarding religious practice during the early twentieth century:

Methodism has a great hold on the Manx people today, but it has caused little serious disagreement with the established Church. The Island has been fortunate in having been spared not only the mutual persecution of Protestants and Roman Catholics during the period of the Reformation, but also the repression of Dissenters which was practised in England particularly during the seventeenth century. On the contrary, long after the coming of Methodism people would go to the church in the morning and the chapel at night, and the parish clerk might be a local preacher. To this day some of the church wardens are active Methodists.¹¹

⁷ Harrison, p.361.

⁸ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *A Son of Hagar*, (1886; New York: A.L. Burt Company Publishers, n.d.), p.111.

⁹ Francis Coakley, Extended version of a lecture, 'The Ascendancy of Methodism', part of a series on 'Aspects of the Manx Church', delivered in St German's Cathedral, Peel, March 1999

<<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/rise/rise.htm>> accessed 6 October 2016.

¹⁰ *My Story*, p.29.

¹¹ Robert H. Kinvig, *The Isle of Man: A Social, Cultural and Political History* (1944; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975), pp.130-31.

E.V. Chapman, the first archivist of the Manx Methodist Society, notes that Methodists played a major role in social and civic matters.¹² A significant proportion were Primitive Methodists. Reverend William Curry, minister at Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Chapel in Douglas, cites some examples. The first mayor of Douglas in 1896 was Thomas Keig, a prominent Primitive Methodist who designed a chapel on Douglas Promenade; Thomas Cormode, a proponent of Manx political reform, who became a member of the Manx lower chamber, the House of Keys, in 1903, was also a Primitive Methodist preacher. Together with Thomas Keig, he founded a Local Preachers Association.¹³ Although Wesleyans retained a strong presence in many of the Island's parishes, returns for the 1851 religious census show that they were outnumbered by the Primitives in Douglas, Castletown and many rural villages such as Arbory, Braddan, Bride, and Lonan.¹⁴

Caine always identified Manx Methodism as Primitive Methodism. In his autobiography, he records that his father, John Caine, was at one period of his life a Primitive Methodist class leader and local preacher.¹⁵ Caine also describes his positive memories of Primitive Methodist religious practice. He recalls the 'little Methodist chapels dotted over every part of the Island', the camp meetings of the Primitives and the 'sweet and simple faith which expressed itself in the homely lives of the farmers and fishermen with their good wives and daughters'.¹⁶ These patterns of religious observance were a formative influence on Caine's later beliefs. He was particularly impressed by the emotionalism of the Primitive Methodists, and after a visit to the United States in 1895, he observed the 'quietism' of Methodist worship in New England; 'no spontaneity, no manifest heart, no deep cry from a well of emotion – nothing that could for an instant be called an outburst of religious enthusiasm'.¹⁷ He

¹² E.V. Chapman, *The Story of Manx Methodism*, Part 4 Douglas Wesleyan Chapels and Sunday Schools n.d. <www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/story/index.htm> accessed 6 October 2016.

¹³ Reverend William Curry, 'The Story of Primitive Methodism in the Isle of Man', *Primitive Methodist World*, 14 February 1907, pp.105-6 <<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/curry/p6.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.

¹⁴ Francis Coakley, Tabulated Returns by Town Parish from update of paper delivered to Manx Methodist Historical Society AGM, Nov 1998 <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/rc1851/rc_tab.htm> accessed 6 October 2016.

¹⁵ *My Story*, p.28.

¹⁶ *My Story*, p.27.

¹⁷ *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 13 October 1895.

went on to contrast this with worship amongst the Primitive Methodists in England and on the Isle of Man, in particular, the camp meetings with:

Cries of “Glory be to God” from all over the house, rising in enthusiasm, until towards the end there is a veritable outburst of cries as if the whole body of the people had risen in an ecstasy.¹⁸

This respect for public displays of religious fervour drawn from Primitive Methodism remained with Caine throughout his life – many years later when he visited Egypt he was deeply moved by the sight of Muslim pilgrims praying *en masse* in the desert sunset, and by their enthusiastic celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday.

Nonconformity, in the form of both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism also exerted a powerful influence on the development of Manx literature, along with the fact that until the early 1600s Manx Gaelic, the majority language until the mid-nineteenth century, lacked a written form. John Phillips, Bishop of Sodor and Man (1604-1633) formulated ‘consistent phonetic spellings’ for Manx words based on the English alphabet to translate the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁹ Writing in 1901, A.W. Moore, the Manx historian and antiquarian, remarked that ‘With the exception of Tom Brown [T.E.Brown], Manxmen have not attained any eminence in literature’.²⁰ Literature published in Manx Gaelic during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period coincident with the expansion of Methodism on the Island, was mainly religious, and included the following: a translation of the Bible, an abridgement of *Paradise Lost* (*Pergys Caillt*) by Thomas Christian (1796), editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1840, 1842) and collections of hymns (1830, 1846).²¹ Several volumes of poetry were produced during the nineteenth century by the native Manx, including Esther Nelson (1810-43), William Kennish (1799-1862) and T.E. Brown (1830-97).²² Thus, the Nonconformist prejudice against the novel persisted for a

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sarah Goodwins, *A Brief History of the Isle of Man* (Sutton, Surrey: Loaghtan Books, 2011), pp.71-73.

²⁰ A.W. Moore, *Manx Worthies, or Biographies of Notable Manx Men and Women* (Douglas, Isle of Man: S.K. Broadbent & Company, 1901), p.93.

²¹ R.L. Thompson, ‘The Manx Language’, in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Vol. V, The Modern Period 1830-1999*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp.312-322 (p.312).

²² Ulla Corkill, ‘Nineteenth Century Literature in English Relating to the Isle of Man, in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Vol. V, The Modern Period 1830-1999*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp.323-330 (pp.324-25).

greater length of time on the Isle of Man than in the rest of the British Isles. When Caine moved to the Island in 1893, he had established a reputation as an author of some merit on the British mainland. However, his standing in the literary world would have been unappreciated by the Nonconformist majority on the Isle of Man

Elsewhere in Britain, as Philip Waller relates, a 'positive attitude' toward fiction was 'increasingly adopted by Churchmen of all stripes'.²³ When Caine commenced his writing career in the 1880s such prejudices were common in the rest of Britain, especially among less educated, devout Nonconformists, but they became less frequent after the turn of the century with the increasing assimilation of Nonconformity into the mainstream of religious observance. As Helmstadter has pointed out, this was a process which began with the better off rejecting as narrow and provincial the distinctive Nonconformist culture, with its avoidance of secular amusements including novel reading and the theatre. With the abolition of religious tests in 1871 it became possible for dissenters to attend Oxford and Cambridge; wealthy Nonconformists began to enjoy reading fiction, going to concerts and attending the theatre. Gradually it became 'respectable' for their less well-off co-religionists to read fiction, especially if it had a strong moral or religious theme'.²⁴ William Robertson Nicoll, editor of the Nonconformist periodical, *The British Weekly*, expressed the hope that 'There will yet arise some great modern novelist as a chief apostle of God'.²⁵

A significant number of clergymen and the religious press, representative of the major denominations, including Nonconformity, praised Caine's novels. In a sermon at the City Temple, London, the Congregationalist minister Joseph Parker stated that he had read *The Christian* 'with the greatest care and with complete admiration and sympathy as to its supreme motive'.²⁶ *The Methodist Times* described *The Eternal City* as 'an entrancing, delicious and most pathetic love story' which was at the same time 'a profound and brilliant volume'.²⁷ However, as Ulla Corkill comments, the Manx 'puritanical dislike' of fiction persisted, unless it was

²³ Waller, p.1010.

²⁴ Richard J. Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' in *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. IV, Interpretations*, ed. by Gerard Parsons (1988; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.61-95 (p.87).

²⁵ Cited in Waller, p.2010.

²⁶ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 October 1897.

²⁷ *The Methodist Times*, 22 August 1901.

‘educational or morally uplifting’.²⁸ The hostility towards novels and novelists expressed by many Manx Primitive Methodists, which is described below, demonstrates the persistence of this puritanical streak. Samuel Norris recalls that Caine was accused of ‘making a living by telling lies’.²⁹

However, novels which combined a Manx background, pious Nonconformist characters and a strong moral message such as Hesba Stretton’s *The Fishers of Derbyhaven* (1865)³⁰ and Bellanne Stowell’s *Manxland: A Tale* (1863)³¹ were popular Sunday school prizes on the Island.³² Some of these prizes seem likely to have been awarded by the numerous Primitive Methodist Sunday schools - for example, Wellington Street and Quine’s Hill in Douglas, Kirk Michael, Baldrine, Castletown and the tiny hamlet of Baldhoon, where ‘A Sunday school of about 80 children was gathered, well-staffed, with good teachers’.³³ Stretton (1832-1911) came from an Evangelical Anglican family and was a spinster who lived a life of devout simplicity and hard work; she was reported never to have visited a theatre.³⁴ Her short novel is an account of a young boy, Peter, a convert to Primitive Methodism in defiance of his hard-drinking guardian, who also converts in the closing chapters. Stowell was a greatly loved and respected teacher at the school in Ballabeg,³⁵ and her writing evidently met with the approval of the Nonconformist population. An introductory sketch in *Manxland* focused on the work of the Manx Home Missions, an Anglican organisation set up in 1839 ‘to establish [Anglican] services’ in remote parts of the Island’s parishes.³⁶ The novel itself illustrates the benefits of church attendance and temperance for a Manx working class family. A second work by Stowell dealt with a similarly worthy topic; entitled *Nellie Brennan*, it was a biography of a pious Irishwoman who nursed cholera victims in Douglas during the 1832 outbreak.³⁷ Although both books were published some thirty years before *The Manxman*, Caine’s

²⁸ Corkill, p.330.

²⁹ Norris, p.22.

³⁰ Hesba Stretton, *The Fishers of Derbyhaven* (1870; London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.).

³¹ Bellanne Stowell, *Manxland: A Tale* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1863).

³² Corkill, p.330.

³³ Reverend William Curry, ‘The Story of Primitive Methodism in the Isle of Man, Part VIII’, *Primitive Methodist World*, 14 March 1907 <<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/curry/p9.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.

³⁴ Valerie Boland, ‘Who Wrote *The Fishers of Derbyhaven*’, *Manx Life*, January-February 1984, 49-51.

³⁵ Moore, p.107.

³⁶ *M*, pp.2-3.

³⁷ Moore, p.107.

personal experiences go on to prove that little had changed during that period as regards the Manx attitude to fiction. Whilst Manx-based morality tales centred around good works and conversion were approved, those novels with a greater imaginative content and stronger plots, such as Caine's own *Manxman* were seen as propagating falsehoods, of which Satan was the father, as every staunch Primitive Methodist would recognise.

During the early 1870s when Caine spent two years living with his schoolmaster uncle, James Teare, at Maughold in the north of the Island, he observed first-hand the Manx aversion to fiction which he was to encounter frequently throughout his fifty-year career as a novelist:

There was a side of my own life which they [the local people] could not share. That was the side that concerned books, other books than they kept on the 'lath' (the ceiling shelf in the kitchen), the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Clarke's Commentary* and *The Land and the Book* – books that might have shocked that Puritan sense which they did not yet know as the 'Nonconformist conscience', books of poetry, and even fiction or perhaps drama, whose authors (as an unforgiving Manx Methodist afterwards said of me) "made their living telling lies".³⁸

Accounts of the way in which Caine's novels (and fiction in general) were equated with lies by many pious Primitive Methodists on the Isle of Man gained common currency and can be traced to various sources. An article in *The Methodist Times* relates the story of a Harvest Festival celebration at Peel Primitive Methodist chapel which was attended by Caine. Afterwards, a 'good, simple minded man' approached the preacher to remark on Caine's presence in the congregation and said; 'What a pity [. . .] that such a man should be writing *novelty* all his life!'.³⁹ Similarly, shortly after Caine settled at Greeba in 1893, a local farmer who lived nearby commented on the 'tremenjus style' in which Caine lived. On being told that he wrote successful novels, the farmer exclaimed 'The lazy beggar!'.⁴⁰ The fact that the farmer did not appear to

³⁸ *My Story*, p.40.

³⁹ *The Methodist Times*, 16 August 1894.

⁴⁰ 'Mr Hall Caine and his Neighbours', *M.A.P.* [Mostly About People], 4 August 1900.

be aware of Caine's best-selling status goes some way to confirm the idea of ingrained ignorance among Islanders regarding the novel.

Fishermen who were portrayed in his novels *The Deemster* and *The Manxman* also shared this farmer's attitude towards Caine and his work. A writer from the Liverpool satirical magazine *The Porcupine* visited the Island in the summer of 1896. The magazine was set up by the Manxman, Hugh Shimmin, and 'developed into a unique social power which he used with tremendous effect in revolutionising the condition of Liverpool'.⁴¹ Its writer spoke to several Peel fishermen who were depicted in *The Manxman*. Many outwardly displayed deep respect for Caine and would spend time in conversation with him when he visited the town (and gathered material for his novels). However, one of them concluded 'He's [Caine] no grate man [. . .] He has med us all laft at. There's men give five shillin for one book, just to laff at us, the finest men in the world [...] it's a grate pity, makin' his livin' by telling lies'.⁴²

Caine attempts to explain this attitude, and his remarks are worth quoting extensively:

That anything should come out of nothing, that there is such a thing as imagination, that any human brother of an honest man could say that a thing had been, which had not been – these are bewildering difficulties to the modern Manxman. That a novel can be false and yet true – that, well, that's foolishness. I wrote a Manx romance called *The Deemster*; and I did not expect my countrymen of the primitive kind to tolerate it for a moment. It was merely a fiction, and the true Manxman of the old sort only believes what is true. He does not read very much, and when he does read, it is not novels. But he could not keep his hands off the novel, and on the whole, and in the long run, he liked it [. . .] But there was only one condition on which he would take it to his bosom – it must be true.⁴³

⁴¹ Moore, pp.107-8.

⁴² *The Porcupine*, 8 September 1896.

⁴³ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Little Manx Nation* (1891; New York: D. Appleton & Company, Publishers, n.d.), p.111.

Caine's use of the adjective 'primitive' to describe his 'countrymen' is significant. When referring to Primitive Methodism, Caine habitually used capital letters.⁴⁴ His use of a lower-case letter here suggests that he was using the word to imply a lack of development, refinement and culture. It also indicates a degree of annoyance that whilst he was acclaimed as a best-selling novelist in the rest of Britain, the friend of literary figures such as Wilkie Collins and R. D. Blackmore, those he considered as his fellow countrymen failed to award an appropriate measure of respect. Certainly, their attitude to fiction was problematic for Caine. He was a successful author who believed that fiction had the potential to exert a positive moral influence but he was naturally anxious to establish his credentials as a novelist in metropolitan literary circles, the very people who were likely to view the Manx Primitives, with their distrust of fiction, as the epitome of the unlettered country yokel. Caine probably wished to distance himself from such people. These factors account for the unresolved tension in Caine's relations with Primitive Methodism on the Isle of Man – his fond boyhood memories were very much at odds with the actuality of adulthood.

Consequently, Caine also related numerous examples of simple, uneducated individuals on the Island claiming personal acquaintance with fictional people or places in his novels. After publication of *The Bondman* (1890), which was set partly on the Isle of Man, an old Manx fisherman told Caine that he remembered a flour mill owned by one of the central characters, Jason Gorry, 'which had never existed except in the author's brain'.⁴⁵ Another, more astute, Islander exploited this erroneous belief in the veracity of fiction, much to Caine's amusement:

After *The Manxman*, a shrewd old friend of mine, living by the water-trough on Ballure, conceived the idea that he was the hero of that story; a photographer photographed him in that character, and now the good canny man does a comfortable business by selling souvenirs of himself as the only original Pete Quilliam, whom Kitty Cregeen was so heartless as to run away from.⁴⁶

This literal-mindedness gave rise to the firm conviction that any incidences of fictional immorality or sin on the part of the Manx (adultery, pre-marital sex, and illegitimacy

⁴⁴ WIWTWP, p.43; 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind', *Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

⁴⁵ *Liverpool Echo*, 1 September 1931.

⁴⁶ *My Story*, p.207.

in the case of the two novels considered in this chapter) cast a slur on the whole nation and its moral standards. Vivien Allen made the following ironic comment about *The Manxman*:

He [Caine] was accused of traducing the Island's maidens. No Manx girl could possibly behave as Kate Cregeen did – they were all chaste and virginal to a girl, it was asserted. Evidently those who made this claim had not looked through their parish registers and seen the number of births entered with only the mother's name.⁴⁷

Edward Cannell, a Manxman resident in Stretford, near Manchester, complained that many people, as well as the Manx with whom he had come into contact, looked upon and spoke of Caine's Manx novels 'as accounts true to the place':

Consequently the Manx themselves are disgusted, and those who are not are led to form an opinion of a country contrary to what [...] it is.⁴⁸

A similar comment was made regarding *The Master of Man*; by Mr K. B. White, who wrote to the local press posing the question 'Does *The Master of Man* give us another grievance?':

Manx people have always regarded their distinguished countryman, Sir Hall Caine, with suspicion and hostility. Go where you will throughout the Island, you will hear it declared – most loudly by those who have never read a book – that the author's earlier novels consist of deliberate libels upon the nation and there can be no doubt that the newly published *Master of Man* will be scrutinised vigilantly for new causes of offence.⁴⁹

The literal views of fiction described above were not shared by educated islanders, as Caine recognised when he wrote of the Manxman 'who finds it as easy as anybody else to put himself into a position of sympathy with works of pure imagination'.⁵⁰ Despite the expansion of the holiday industry, a significant proportion of the

⁴⁷ Allen, p.233.

⁴⁸ *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser*, 2 November 1894.

⁴⁹ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 6 August 1921.

⁵⁰ *My Story*, p.113.

workforce still remained on the land even in the 1890s.⁵¹ These agricultural labourers and crofters, along with fishermen and miners, were the mainstay of rural Primitive Methodist congregations. The educated classes were in a minority. However, this minority included many well respected, high profile individuals. Some were Caine's friends, such as the Manx poet T.E. Brown and A.W. Moore, the Cambridge educated antiquarian and Manx Attorney General. Caine considered Brown as 'an elder brother, a wiser, stronger, purer, serener nature, to whom I could go at any time for solace, and counsel and support'.⁵² In a tribute to Moore written after his death, Caine described him as 'one of my oldest friends in the Isle of Man'.⁵³ Given Caine's friendship with such influential individuals it is not surprising that his novels often received favourable reviews from the equally influential Manx press. A glowing review of *The Manxman* which appeared in a local newspaper was written by T.E. Brown, himself an Anglican clergyman who, like Caine professed a broad, tolerant Christianity, with a simple belief in 'the reality and essential goodness of God'.⁵⁴ He commented that Caine:

[...] may lay down his pen with the happy conviction that he has achieved a veritable triumph in the general field of literature, and won the gratitude and admiration of his countrymen.⁵⁵

Clearly Caine experienced frustration with the recurrent adverse treatment of his chosen profession at the hands of those he considered to be his fellow countrymen. Even after his death in 1931, an obituary in the *Liverpool Echo* commented on the 'strong puritanical streak' among the Manx regarding fiction, citing an incident during Caine's 1901 election campaign, which was reminiscent of earlier encounters with Peel fishermen, when a farmer, who was also a local Primitive Methodist preacher, was heard to say 'Tut! Don't ask me to vote for a man who makes his living by telling lies!'.⁵⁶

⁵¹ John Beckerson, 'Statistical Appendix' in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Vol. V, The Modern Period 1830-1999*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 417-36 (p.426, 433).

⁵² *My Story*, p.210.

⁵³ *Isle of Man Weekly Times*, ? November 1909.

⁵⁴ Norris, p.139.

⁵⁵ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 4 August 1894.

⁵⁶ *Liverpool Echo*, 31 August 1931.

The author would send copies of his work to Nonconformist clergymen and their families in England. These were well received indicating that, unlike on the Isle of Man, the traditional Nonconformist opposition to fiction was relaxing on the British mainland provided that the novel concerned was considered to inculcate strong moral values. Katherine Price Hughes, the widow of Caine's friend the Reverend Hugh Price Hughes (who established the West London Mission and is a central figure in the next Chapter), thanked Caine for a copy of *The Prodigal Son* and told him that she was 'looking forward with very much pleasure' to reading the book, as her late husband would have done.⁵⁷ Sister Mildred of the West London Mission asked Caine if she could attend a rehearsal of the play *The Christian*.⁵⁸ In Liverpool, the Baptist minister Charles Aked of Pembroke Road Chapel, who frequently based his sermons on popular novels, sent his thanks for a copy of *The Christian*, remarking that he had 'already devoured the book' and that he intended to preach on it the following Sunday. Aked promised Caine a copy of the sermon, and pointed out that the congregations on Sunday evenings numbered some 1,200, and for a sermon on a novel by Caine, 'we are sure to have a number of strangers more or less cultivated and more or less given to reading'.⁵⁹

Caine also made efforts to encourage Nonconformist clergy to recognise the potential of the drama for moral edification. In 1898, the stage version of *The Christian* had its New York debut and to mark the occasion, Caine organised a special performance of his play at the Knickerbocker Theatre specifically for ministers of various denominations, along with their wives and children. Caine addressed the audience after the performance and argued that the theatre was a moral place, and that Art which took no colour from morality could never exist. The newspaper report commented 'To judge from the applause, the production was received with great favour by most of those present'.⁶⁰

Caine's own parents had a deeply ingrained prejudice against the theatre. He recalled that his father 'held an attitude of determined hostility' towards 'the theatre

⁵⁷ Letter to Caine from Katherine Price Hughes, dated 7 November 1904, Hall Caine Papers, Box 55.

⁵⁸ Letter to Caine from Sister Mildred, dated 20 August 1907, Hall Caine Papers, Box 55.

⁵⁹ Letter to Caine from the Reverend Charles Aked, dated 17 August 1897, Hall Caine Papers, Box 43.

⁶⁰ *New York World*, 4 November 1898, cited in the *Isle of Man Times and General Advertiser*, 26 November 1898.

and all its doings'. Caine eventually persuaded John Caine, then in his sixties, to see Henry Irving play Hamlet and although he decided that the play was 'good, very good', his strict Nonconformist conscience was uneasy; 'The uncomfortable sense, only too plainly indicated in his face, that he was in a theatre, and if death came to him there, what would he have to say for himself?'⁶¹

As might be expected Caine was sensitive to negative views of his work. He had a high opinion of writing as a profession; in 1909 he commented; 'I [...] feel that the work of the novelist is, taken as a whole, the very best kind of literary work that is being done in Great Britain today'.⁶² He often pointed to the potential of fiction and the drama in terms of improving morals, but such persuasion was futile in the face of the deeply ingrained prejudice against fiction among the Primitive Methodist working classes on the Isle of Man.

On more than one occasion, Caine expressed his belief that the novel was also an important vehicle of religious instruction; 'the best stage, the best platform and the best pulpit in the Kingdom'. He was critical of those who 'talked of novel writing as a profession that was generally frivolous and often mischievous, and one to be tolerated as a necessary evil'.⁶³ Caine felt that the Churches should be 'very liberal and broad minded towards the pleasures and amusements of the people', and he had no sympathy whatever 'with the church people, who, in these days of revivals, denounced the theatre, the novel, and even the ballroom'. Whilst admitting that faults existed regarding popular amusements, he asserted that an 'impure novel' enjoyed nothing but a temporary and trumpery success'.⁶⁴ The Church should encourage all that was best in the social life of its congregation and Caine's remarks singled out the Nonconformists:

[...] let the church be more and more the home and centre of interest of the people; let religion protect and guard and sanctify and ennoble the everyday amusements of the people; and then it would have fulfilled a great part of its

⁶¹ *My Story*, pp.228-29.

⁶² *WIWTWP*, pp.2-3.

⁶³ *The Star*, 11 November 1904.

⁶⁴ *Luton Times and Advertiser*, 2 June 1905.

mission which had been much neglected and too often forgotten by the Churches generally and [...] by the nonconformist churches in particular.⁶⁵

In an interview with the journalist and writer R. H. Sherard, Caine admitted that when writing his first two novels, *The Shadow of a Crime* (1885) and *A Son of Hagar* (1886), he simply produced a 'thrilling tale'. Subsequently, his aim was to produce a novel with 'a spiritual intent', examining 'a problem of life', with the core motive of his books focusing on 'the idea of justice, the impression that justice is inevitable'.⁶⁶ Caine felt that the role of a great novelist or dramatist of the stature of Tolstoy, Hugo, Scott or Shakespeare was to act as a 'temporal providence', answering the craving of the human soul for compensation, and showing that 'success may be the best failure and failure the best success, with poverty better than riches'. He concluded 'I count him a great man who teaches that the world is ruled in righteousness'.⁶⁷

Many of Caine's novels are based around a moral dilemma, often of a sexual nature, faced by the central character, who must confront the consequences of his or her actions. This is certainly the case with the two novels, written twenty-seven years apart, which I have chosen for closer consideration in this chapter - *The Manxman* (1894) and *The Master of Man* (1921). Both are set on the Isle of Man, and have very similar plot structures, examining the far reaching, unforeseen consequences of a sexual sin, and the need for restitution by the perpetrator. Both have Nonconformist characters – Primitive Methodists in *The Master of Man* and in *The Manxman*, a sect known as 'The Christians' which has similar beliefs and organisational structure to the Primitives. Caine also strongly believed that the test of a great work of fiction was the presence of 'an ethical intention and its value as a guide to life',⁶⁸ and this intention is present in both *The Manxman* and *The Master of Man*, which embody the traditional concern of evangelical Christians, and particularly Primitive Methodists, with individual moral responsibility for sin and the opportunity for salvation and atonement.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Sherard, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, pp. 570,576.

⁶⁷ *The New York Times*, 14 November 1895.

⁶⁸ Raymond Blathwayt, 'Ethics in Modern Fiction: A Talk with Hall Caine', *Wit and Wisdom*, 22 August 1891, unpaginated.

***The Manxman* - Losing One's Soul**

According to Caine the plot of *The Manxman* was based on the biblical story of David, Uriah and Bathsheba.⁶⁹ The novel relates the story of a young, ambitious middle-class lawyer, Philip Christian, his illegitimate cousin, Pete Quilliam, and Kate Cregeen, daughter of Caesar Cregeen, a miller and publican who is also a local preacher. Pete and Kate are childhood sweethearts. However, Kate's father objects to Pete's poverty and illegitimacy, so Pete leaves for South Africa to seek his fortune in the diamond mines, hoping to return a rich man and gain Caesar's approval to the couple's marriage. He entrusts Kate to Philip's care during his absence, and the pair fall in love, although Philip has deep seated doubts regarding his potential marriage to a woman who is his social inferior. However, when reports of Pete's death reach the Island, Philip allows himself to be seduced by Kate. Unfortunately, Pete is, in fact, still alive and returns home a wealthy man and a desirable husband for Kate. To Kate's disappointment, Philip raises no objection to her marrying Pete, and realising she is pregnant, she does so in order to preserve her reputation. Pete is a devoted husband, but Kate still loves Philip and is overcome by guilt. Meanwhile, Philip's legal career prospers as he is appointed Deemster, chief judge of the Isle of Man. Kate informs Philip that he is the child's father and begs him to take her away; he agrees, but keeps her hidden in his rooms. To avoid embarrassment and preserve Kate's good name, Pete tells his family and friends that Kate is staying with relatives in England. Philip, unable to live with this deception, tells Pete that Kate has died, whilst Kate, overcome by remorse, leaves for London only returning when she hears news of her child's illness. She attempts suicide, which was at that time a criminal offence, and is tried in a court where Philip is the judge, and subsequently jailed. The novel ends with Pete divorcing Kate. Philip, after confessing his relationship with her, resigns his position and the couple are reunited. Pete leaves the Island and returns to South Africa, with the reader is left in no doubt that Kate and Philip will marry.

The novel was, in general, favourably received by critics and reviewers, who chiefly praised its moral message. *The Sketch* described it as:

A present-day version of that ancient, strange romance, the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah – and it is not a novel only but a sermon on the text of

⁶⁹ Sherard, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, p.575.

the highest morality – ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?’.⁷⁰

Similarly, Henry Hanby Hay, a Manxman and editor of *Household News* wrote; ‘One thing Hall Caine has certainly done – and no writer can hope for greater praise – he has brought back God into literature’.⁷¹

Many religious newspapers and periodicals also endorsed the strong moral tone of the novel. In what represented a breakthrough regarding Methodist perceptions of Caine’s work on a literary and ethical level, *The Methodist Times* described *The Manxman* as ‘the most brilliant work of its kind this generation has seen’. The review claimed that ‘The lesson of the tragic story is a moral one throughout, true of all time and evermore emphatic – that Nemesis follows wrong, sure as death and certain as fate’. The reviewer, Thomas Rippon, was only mildly critical regarding Caine’s portrayal of Caesar Cregeen as ‘a canting Manx preacher’, expressing the wish that ‘Mr. Caine had better knowledge of evangelical Christianity and of Methodism in particular. It is his misfortune and not his fault that he does not know better’.⁷² A review in *Zion’s Herald* praised the ethics of *The Manxman*, commenting that ‘The book is an anatomy of guilt, the inevitable result of which the author shows to be remorse, suffering and ruin’.⁷³

Others criticised the novel’s portrayal of pre-marital sex, adultery and divorce. Ealing Public Library rejected the book out of hand as unsuitable for its readers, a decision which was criticised by the press; the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* thought the ban was unjustified, commenting that Caine had ‘handled a theme of temptation and sin and repentance that is perfectly conceivable’.⁷⁴ The Ealing library committee evidently had strict criteria for judging the morality of novels since Marie Corelli’s *Barabbas* was also banned on the grounds that it was ‘cheap and sensational’.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ *The Sketch*, 15 August 1894.

⁷¹ Henry Hanby Hay, ‘Book Reviews: *The Manxman*’, *Household News*, n.d., pp.694-96, Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I (1887-95) p.212.

⁷² *The Methodist Times*, 16 August 1894.

⁷³ *Zion’s Herald*, 9 January 1895.

⁷⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 2 March 1895.

⁷⁵ Brian Masters, *Now Barabbas Was a Rotter: The Extraordinary Life of Marie Corelli* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p.130.

Conversely, *The Graphic* produced a strong defence of Caine's motives in writing *The Manxman*, commenting that:

If there is any writer who is proud of the seriousness of his purpose, and any novel which he regards as specially justifying such pride on his part, that writer is Hall Caine and that novel is *The Manxman*.⁷⁶

The Independent and Nonconformist described the book as 'monstrous'. In an article entitled 'The Morality of *The Manxman*: A Condemnation of Mr. Hall Caine's Novel', the writer claimed that the picture 'uppermost in the public's mind' after reading *The Manxman* would be 'one subversive of Christian doctrine and the motive for Christian effort'. In conclusion, the reviewer asked the following questions regarding the reunion of Philip and Kate:

Is the reader supposed to remember the awful steps to this would be warrantable union – Sulby Glen [the scene of the seduction], Pete's broken heart, Pete's desolate home, Pete's blighted life, Kate's attempted suicide, divorce, defiance of all decencies - and yet be reconciled to it, and to the criticisms of the work, in which the woman is conceded to be, 'after all, the eternal ideal of humanity?'⁷⁷

However, *The Christian Leader* recognised that although 'immoral love [was] the dark thread' in the 'masterly fabric' of the novel, Caine had not 'masked the conduct men and women do under a veil of natural bent':

Mr Hall Caine does not play with conduct like that. To him, sin is sin, the sweet dalliance of the hour has devilry in it, and ruin after it, for the sinners and the innocent; and so far he is a preacher of righteousness, doubly welcome when so many pander to wrong-doing and treat it lightly.⁷⁸

On the Isle of Man the Rev. D. Inglis of Finch Hill Congregational Church, Douglas preached a retrospective sermon reviewing the events of 1894 from a religious perspective, in which he referred to the 'great reputation' made by Caine. He admitted

⁷⁶ *The Graphic*, 9 March 1894.

⁷⁷ *The Independent and Nonconformist*, 9 August 1894.

⁷⁸ *The Christian Leader*, 6 December 1894.

that there were some ‘lovely pictures, both of scenery and life’ in *The Manxman*, but regretted that Caine had ‘permitted himself to print some of its pages’, because:

He has certainly fallen far below his own high aims as a teacher of morals and the reader of his book ought carefully to guard against a certain base alloy it contains.⁷⁹

The term ‘base alloy’ undoubtedly refers to Philip and Kate’s encounter and her subsequent marriage to Pete knowing she is pregnant with Philip’s child. Reviewing *The Manxman* in the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review*, the Reverend William Curry of Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Church in Douglas, stated that the story would be read for many years to come, due to its sensational nature, the name of the author and the growing popularity of the Island as a pleasure resort. However, he expressed disquiet at the novel’s moral tone, commenting that: ‘The story would have gained its power to stir and elevate if it had been free from many sickening details’.⁸⁰

The Manxman shows the potentially catastrophic effects of a single act of wrongdoing. Philip gives way to Kate’s advances despite his intention to end their close friendship. Nature takes its course and Kate is left with no other option than to marry Pete. Philip’s feelings towards Kate are ambivalent; he fears that differences in class and education which separate him from Kate would prevent him realising his ambition of becoming Deemster. However, he cannot find peace of mind until he acknowledges his guilt and abandons his career, hence Caine’s choice of the well-known Bible verse on the novel’s title page ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?’ (Matthew 16.26). In this respect, Caine’s Nonconformist upbringing and the time he spent on the Isle of Man in proximity to Primitive Methodist communities left its mark. Although Caine believed that fiction should entertain, he also believed that it should preach a moral lesson and he takes every opportunity to do so, whether as omniscient narrator or by using various characters as his mouthpiece

Thus, Caine demonstrates throughout the novel that the initial ‘sin’ leads to further wrongdoing. A sexual misdeed produces an increasingly intricate web of

⁷⁹ *Isle of Man Times*, 8 January 1895.

⁸⁰ Undated review from the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review*, cited in the *Isle of Man Times*, 28 December 1895.

deception; ‘a great fault once committed is the first link in a chain. The other links seem to be crimes also’.⁸¹ When Kate goes to live with Philip he becomes ‘an immoral man, a betrayer, an adulterer, with a vulgar secret, which he must support by lying and share with servants’.⁸² Later, Philip is distressed by the poorly educated Pete’s request that he write letters to Kate, to maintain the fiction that she is temporarily absent. He tells Pete she is dead and directs him to an unmarked pauper’s grave in a local churchyard, at which point Philip sees ‘no escape from the mesh of his own lies’.⁸³

As the plot unfolds, Philip becomes a morally diminished human being. He develops a hatred for Pete, his former friend and cousin, as his awareness of ‘his own inferiority, his own duplicity’ grows.⁸⁴ He hopes Pete might be transported if a riot breaks out at a fisherman’s demonstration against government imposition of harbour dues.⁸⁵ Philip believes that ‘Fate is stretching out her hands to him’, to save him from the consequences of his actions.⁸⁶ When his child is taken ill, he initially thinks her death might be best, in that it will conceal his ‘sin’ with Kate forever.⁸⁷ Kate shares his feeling of shame and guilt after leaving Pete:

When she had said in the rapture of passionate confidence that if she possessed Philip’s love there could be no humiliation and no shame, she had not yet dreamt of the creeping degradation of a life in the dark, under a false name, in a false connection; a life under the same roof with Philip, yet not by his side, unacknowledged, hidden and suppressed.⁸⁸

Philip’s moral and physical decline is frequently pointed at throughout the narrative. It is a process which begins with Pete’s return to the Island and the start of Philip’s deception. Pete remarks that Philip looks ‘white and wake [sic] and nervous’ shortly before the wedding.⁸⁹ By the time Philip takes Kate to live with him, he has a ‘tired look of age’, has started drinking heavily and his face is ‘haggard and

⁸¹ *TM*, p.365 (Part 5, XVIII).

⁸² *TM*, p.266 (Part 4, XIII).

⁸³ *TM*, p.387 (Part 5, XXII).

⁸⁴ *TM*, p.333 (Part 5, VII).

⁸⁵ *TM*, p.336 (Part 5, VII).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *TM*, p.404 (Part 6, III).

⁸⁸ *TM*, p.358 (Part 5, XV).

⁸⁹ *TM*, p.90 (Part 3, XVI).

emaciated'.⁹⁰ At one point 'It was almost as though Death had entered, so thin and bony were his cheeks, so wild his eyes, so cold his hands'.⁹¹ However, after confessing his sin, renouncing the Deemstership and the resultant reunion with Kate, Philip is 'a man transfigured. The extreme pallor of his cheeks was gone, his step was firm, and his face was radiant'.⁹²

Philip meets his doppelganger on several occasions - on the stairs at his lodgings he is confronted by his own figure, a cloaked form expressing 'contempt, repugnance and loathing' towards him.⁹³ Superstition associates such visions with the imminent death of the person who sees them, but in this case Philip realises that the apparition is his own conscience, prompting him to do the right thing. When he decides to face up to his misdeeds and make amends, he feels certain that the 'terrible shadow' has gone for ever.⁹⁴ Kate is his partner in sin and is a necessary foil to his moral resurrection. As he decides to resign as Deemster, Caine comments:

He was putting the world and the prince of the world behind his back. All this worldly glory and human gratitude was but the temptation of Satan. With God's help [...] he would triumph over everything.⁹⁵

Philip often tries to justify his actions by blaming Fate; 'If there had been sin, he had been dragged into it by blind powers he could not command. And what was true of himself was also true of Kate'.⁹⁶ He believes his predicament to be 'partly the fault of Fate', but in the novel's final chapter, he acknowledges the temptation 'to shuffle his fault on to Fate [. . .] to persuade himself that he could not have acted differently'.⁹⁷

But the characters in *The Manxman* are not the victims of an indifferent or malevolent destiny, as is the case with say, Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1892) which also features a young woman who finds herself unmarried and pregnant like

⁹⁰ *TM*, p.269 (Part 4, XIII); p.298 (Part Four, XIX); p.329 (Part Five, VII).

⁹¹ *TM*, p.373 (Part 5, XIX).

⁹² *TM*, p.493 (Part 6, XXIII).

⁹³ *TM*, p.338 (Part 5, VIII).

⁹⁴ *TM*, p.391 (Part 5, XXIII).

⁹⁵ *TM*, p.483 (Part 6, XXI).

⁹⁶ *TM*, p.297 (Part 4, XIX).

⁹⁷ *TM*, p.365 (Part 5, XVII); *TM*, p.491 (Part 5, XXII).

Kate Cregeen. Reverend Cubbon, lecturing on *The Manxman* to an audience in Banbury commented on the difference between the two novels. In *Tess*:

[...] the sinner slinked through the world over which the heavens were like brass, unbroken by the voice of any God who saw, or heard, or cared, through a world filled with sighs and groans, which rose but not reached the ears of any being who could hear or save. In *The Manxman*, on the contrary, the sinner made through a world over which the heavens were bespangled with stars of hope, and in those dark moments when the despair of sin lay like a pall upon the buried self, the eye was caught by the appearance of a ladder which was seen to rest upon the earth and to reach to the very Throne of God and that ladder was the ladder of self-sacrifice.⁹⁸

However, in Caine's novel, Philip and Kate are the authors of their own misfortune and the masters of their own destiny. Caine insists that they must atone for their sins - in moral terms, they are lesser human beings until they make restitution. The narrative constantly points this out to the reader as characters procrastinate, vacillate and fail to do the right thing. But, there is always the potential for positive change.

Caesar's 'Christians' – Primitive Methodism in *The Manxman*

As has been shown, Manx churchgoers were strongly Nonconformist, and within *The Manxman*, Caine focuses on Methodism through the character of Caesar Cregeen. A former Primitive Methodist local preacher, class leader and chapel steward, he considers the 'Primitives' as insufficiently puritanical and established his own sect, 'The Christians', which has very strict rules on conduct for the 'saved':

A saved soul must not wear gold or costly apparel, or give way to softness of bodily indulgence, or go to fairs for the sake of sport, or appear in the show tents of play actors, or sing songs or read books or take any diversion that did not tend to the knowledge of God.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *The Banbury Guardian*, 1 November 1894.

⁹⁹ *TM*, p.24 (Part 1, V).

Secular amusements including dancing and the theatre are forbidden, hence Caesar's anger when he discovers Kate, his daughter, and other customers dancing to fiddle music in his wife's public house:

What was a fiddler? He was a servant of corruption, holding a candle to disorderly walkers and happy sinners on their way into the devil's pinfold. And what for was fiddles? Fiddles was for play actors and theaytres. "And theaytres is *there*" said Caesar, indicating with his foot one flag on the kitchen-floor, "and hell flames is *there*," he added, rolling his toe over to the joint of the next one.¹⁰⁰

Just like the 'Primitive' local preachers who travelled around the Island holding weekday services, Caesar travelled from place to place evangelising.¹⁰¹ His 'Christians' also hold Camp Meetings, open air gatherings with hymn singing, preaching and encouragement for sinners to convert.¹⁰² New members, Kate and Pete in this case, receive a quarterly ticket, as a token of their membership.¹⁰³

Caesar's 'Christians' are Primitive Methodists in all but name. Caine may have decided against overtly describing them as such to minimise offence to Primitive Methodists on the Isle of Man, but he was unsuccessful. Although it was unlikely that the novel would be read by staunch Primitives, the plot and characters would quickly become common knowledge by hearsay and gossip in such a small community, and produce speculation among the literal minded population as to the 'true' identity of various characters. When *The Manxman* was serialised in a local paper, Caine 'found it necessary' to append the following note:

The author of *The Manxman* wishes it to be understood that although he has used proper names and places which are highly familiar in the Isle of Man, he has not intended any reference whatever to individual persons or particular families.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ *TM*, p.27 (Part 1, V).

¹⁰¹ *TM*, p.26 (Part 1, V); p.64 (Part 2, II).

¹⁰² *TM*, pp.248-50 (Part 4, XI).

¹⁰³ *TM*, p.250; John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from its origin to the Conference of 1860* (London: R. Davies, 1864) p.567.

¹⁰⁴ *Isle of Man Times*, 19 June 1894.

In his review of *The Manxman*, the Manx-born poet and lecturer, Henry Hanby Hay, pointed out that the part of the Island chosen by Caine as the novel's setting had only three or four thousand inhabitants and that:

The elders of this little population must spend much valuable time trying to fit the caps of the created personages to the heads of past Manx worthies and unworthies.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps surprisingly, Caine's positive childhood memories of Methodism on the Isle of Man are not reflected in *The Manxman*. His autobiography recalls 'rugged peasant preachers [. . .] great preachers' who provoked delirious emotion in their hearers.¹⁰⁶ Caine may have romanticised his past, recalling happy memories of childhood visits to his Manx grandmother in a rural environment which would have been a contrast to his family home in Liverpool. Given his father's frequent changes of religious affiliation as he moved from the Anglican Church, in which Caine was baptised, to various Nonconformist sects, the willingness of many Methodists on the Island to worship in Anglican churches would have appealed to him.¹⁰⁷ However, it is more likely that their widespread antipathy to fiction and drama soured Caine's views in adulthood. Despite this, after taking up permanent residence on the Island in 1893, he still liked to consider himself as a man of the Manx people, and frequently attended community events. Typical of these are a dinner for one hundred elderly people held in Peel when he 'sat among the old women and talked with them',¹⁰⁸ and events such as a Grand Fete Day and a swimming gala, both in Peel, at which he presented prizes.¹⁰⁹ (Figure 2) His efforts in this direction must have made criticism of his profession difficult to bear without resentment, and this ultimately finds expression in his portrayals of Manx Nonconformity, typified by Caesar Cregeen.

Although Caesar is a powerful orator, he is also a sanctimonious, scripture-quoting hypocrite. His conversation is littered with biblical references and he boasts of his success as a preacher; 'I've praiched on that text [...] till it's wet me through to

¹⁰⁵ Hanby Hay, *Household News*, p.694.

¹⁰⁶ *My Story*, p.27.

¹⁰⁷ WIWTWP, pp.41-42.

¹⁰⁸ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 13 January 1894.

¹⁰⁹ Poster advertising the Grand Fete Day Programme of Sports, Peel, 31 July 1894, Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I (1887-95); Poster advertising a Swimming Gala, Peel, 31 July 1907; Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook IV (1906-11).

the waistcoat'.¹¹⁰ Although he disapproves of drinking, he tolerates his wife running a public house, *The Manx Fairy*, which provokes criticism from a few of those present at the Camp Meeting, and other local people.¹¹¹ All objections to Pete's illegitimacy disappear on discovering that he is a rich man, and thus no longer a 'monument of sin, without a name, a bastard'.¹¹² When he believes Pete to be dead, Caesar assumes the role of a father figure, and decides to collect Pete's trunk from the steamship in the hope of finding money or important documents. There is an undignified tussle on the quayside as he comes close to exchanging blows with Pete's grandfather, who has also arrived to take possession of the trunk.¹¹³

Caesar's attitudes are often compared and contrasted with those of Pete within the novel. He is unsympathetic to a young single mother, Christian Killip, who is dismissed as 'nothing but a trollop', whilst Pete gives her twenty pounds for the child.¹¹⁴ Caesar displays a similar attitude on discovering Pete has concealed Kate's desertion, when he leads a delegation of 'Christians' to Pete's home. Consequently, he publicly disowns Kate as 'a daughter of Belial', and denounces Pete as a liar, expelling the pair from the congregation.¹¹⁵ Such a pietistic narrow outlook is a contributing part of Caine's aversion to much organised religion. The name of Caesar's sect is completely ironic – the 'Christians' are anything but Christian. They claim to be the embodiment of true Christianity, when in fact they are a very minor faction, the antithesis of Caine's ideal of a broad, inclusive Christianity which stressed what the various denominations held in common, rather than focussing on often minor differences of scriptural interpretation or dogma.

On the other hand, Pete exemplifies the broad non-dogmatic Christianity favoured by Caine. He does not share Caesar's preoccupation with matters such as 'instantaneous regeneration, assurance and sinless perfection', focusing on kindness to others, not on sin, guilt and the exclusivity of the 'saved'.¹¹⁶ Whilst Pete's beliefs may not pass Caesar's close inspection, he is truer to Christian principles, and

¹¹⁰ *TM*, p.29 (Part 1, V).

¹¹¹ *TM*, p.24 (Part 1, V); p.249 (Part 4, IX).

¹¹² *TM*, p.41 (Part 1, VIII).

¹¹³ *TM*, pp.160-62 (Part 3, IX).

¹¹⁴ *TM*, p.194 (Part 3, XVI); p.201 (Part 3, XVIII).

¹¹⁵ *TM*, pp.370-71 (Part 5, XVIII).

¹¹⁶ *TM*, p.24 (Part 1, V).

generous to the poor and disadvantaged.¹¹⁷ When in South Africa he baptises the illegitimate child of a dying woman to give her peace of mind, making a comment which certainly reflects Caine's own views:

Then the girl died happy and aisy, and what for shouldn't she? The words were the same, and the water was the same, and if the hand wasn't as clane as usual, maybe Him that's above wouldn't bother about the diff'rance.¹¹⁸

Pete becomes one of Caesar's 'Christians', not from any religious conviction, but simply to follow Kate, his wife. However, he is also a wealthy man, and prior to this 'conversion' Pete is approached by other Christian groups finding that the 'baser sort' among them vie in the effort to win him over, and 'abuse each other badly in their efforts to lay hold of his money bags',¹¹⁹ in an example of the sectarian rivalry from which Caine always distanced himself. Members of these 'Christian groups' admit that Pete, in his generosity to less well-off individuals, practises the religion he does not believe in.¹²⁰ Hence Caine is demonstrating his belief that the morality of those who did not profess orthodox forms of Christianity often approximated more closely to the teachings of Christ than that of the conventional Christian. After he discovers Kate's relationship with Philip, Pete shows his capacity for forgiveness, and deflects blame on to himself, recognising that he married a woman who was in love with another man; 'I came between them [...] she was not for me. She was not mine. She was Philip's'.¹²¹

All too often, religious practice in *The Manxman* appears to bring neither comfort nor joy, as reflected in Caine's description of hymn singing. During Kate's illness, she hears the 'doleful' notes' of a 'droning' hymn 'trail' through the mill walls,¹²² and at the Mhelliah (harvest) celebrations, the workers sing a hymn, 'a most doleful strain, dragged out to death on every note'.¹²³ Kate's initial conversion to her father's 'Christians' is half hearted and short lived, following an all-night prayer meeting when Caesar prays over her, exhorting her to seek forgiveness.¹²⁴ After her

¹¹⁷ *TM*, p.201 (Part 3, XVIII).

¹¹⁸ *TM*, p.255 (Part 4, X).

¹¹⁹ *TM*, p.248 (Part 4, IX).

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *TM*, p.437 (Part 6, IX).

¹²² *TM*, p.185 (Part 3, XIII).

¹²³ *TM*, p.123 (Part 2, XIII).

¹²⁴ *TM*, p.26 (Part 1, V).

marriage, racked by guilt concerning the paternity of her daughter, Kate ‘flew to religion as a refuge’. Her conversion to ‘The Christians’ takes place at a camp meeting typical of those held by Primitive Methodists, with energetic preaching by Caesar and the ‘saved’ realising their conversion in heightened emotional states.¹²⁵ Caine recognised the power of such feelings in elevating worshippers to a heightened state of religious awareness, which he respected deeply. He remembered from boyhood the evening prayer meetings of the Primitive Methodists attended by ‘a few rugged men with their big coarse hands and seamy faces [...] praying with the fervour of saints’ and the camp meetings with their ‘rugged peasant preachers’.¹²⁶ However, Kate’s emotional conversion is a sham, motivated not by desire to attain ‘sinless perfection’ but tainted by her guilt at deceiving Pete and fear in case her father and members of his sect disown her when they discover that Peter is not the father of her daughter.¹²⁷

Caesar embodies the narrow-minded attitude so disliked by Caine. When Kate marries, he denounces the sacraments of the Established Church; ‘Can’t a man commit matrimony without a parson bothering a man?’¹²⁸ Kate and Pete are married by the Anglican Parson Quiggin, ‘a tolerant old soul’,¹²⁹ who also baptises Kate’s daughter. Again, this reflects religious practice on Isle of Man with a substantial number of individuals attending both Anglican and Methodist services. However, Caesar is also superstitious, a further example of his hypocrisy, and of the role played by such folk beliefs in *The Manxman*.

Superstitious practices coexisted with deeply held Nonconformist beliefs on the Island, as Caine testifies in his autobiography. The Primitives, like other evangelical Christians, disapproved of all forms of superstition. However, superstition and folklore exercised a powerful hold over the rural Manx even in Caine’s day, largely as a result of the Island’s isolation. The vehemence with which Caesar denounces such practices suggest that these traditions were still deeply entrenched in the Manx psyche even among those who counted themselves as committed Christians and that their hold on the population was acknowledged. Marjorie Killip in her survey of Manx folklore and customs published in 1975 gives an undated account of a staunch

¹²⁵ *TM*, pp.249-50 (Part 4, IX).

¹²⁶ *My Story*, p.27.

¹²⁷ *TM*, p.247 (Part 4, IX).

¹²⁸ *TM*, p.188 (Part 3, XIV).

¹²⁹ *TM*, p.29 (Part 1, V).

Methodist who was reputed to ‘have dealings with the fairies’.¹³⁰ Caine describes his grandmother, a religious woman, who knew the Manx Bible by heart, but who also told the young Caine ‘countless stories [...] of fairies and witches and witch- doctors and the evil eye’, claiming, as a girl, to have been pursued by a troop of fairies. Each evening she left out water and barley bread for the Phynoderee, a supernatural being which supposedly performed various chores while the household slept. Caine writes of her:

She believed in every kind of supernatural influence, the earth and the air were full of spiritual things for her, and I suppose some of her simple faith must have fixed itself in the cells of my brain, for, however stubborn the scepticism of my waking hours, in my sleep the superstitions of my childhood are with me still.¹³¹

In *The Manxman*, Caine describes several Manx folk customs including an account of Kate Cregeen’s actions on All Hallow’s Eve (known as Hollantide on the Isle of Man), eating roasted apples and walking backwards to bed in the hope that she will experience a vision of her future husband. It was also customary for vessels to be filled with water for the ‘little people’ on Hollantide eve and for the ashes of the fire to be raked by ‘the big man’, the head of the household, in order that the fairies could bake their cakes.¹³² When these customs are discussed in the public house, Caesar denounces them vociferously as ‘the instruments of Satan’,¹³³ but later in the day he studiously ignores the three crocks of water which his maidservant places on the table and himself carefully rakes over the ashes on the fire, so that they form ‘a flat surface, on which you might have laid a girdle for baking cakes’ before going to bed.¹³⁴

However, in portraying Caesar’s tacit support for such practices Caine is also revealing, perhaps unconsciously, his desire for the continuation of Manx customs of which he had fond childhood memories. He felt that such traditions were manifestations of a ‘spiritual life’,¹³⁵ and they also added local colour and authenticity to his Manx novels which would prove attractive to readers in other parts of Britain.

¹³⁰ Marjorie Killip, *The Folklore of the Isle of Man* (London and Sydney: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1975), p.31.

¹³¹ *My Story*, pp.19-20.

¹³² *TM*, p.35 (Part 1, VI).

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *TM*, p.44 (Part 1, VIII).

¹³⁵ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 13 January 1894.

The Methodist Times described the novel as ‘genuinely Manx’,¹³⁶ whilst the *Banbury Guardian* commented that literary merit apart, the book would live ‘for its truthful presentation of Manx ways and customs and scenery’.¹³⁷ However, given Caine’s generally negative portrayal of Caesar, it is far more likely to constitute proof of his hypocrisy. In her 1870 novel, *The Fishers of Derbyhaven*, which is also set on the Isle of Man, Hesba Stretton depicts her Primitive Methodist characters setting aside such superstitions, unlike Caesar and his household. One episode in the novel shows two firm believers, Christian and Ellen, accompanying an unconverted visitor on her homeward journey at twilight, due to her ‘superstitious dread of fairies and spirits’. Christian and Ellen ‘know no fear [...] except the fear of God’.¹³⁸

Caesar is an unattractive Nonconformist, more in keeping with the earlier Victorian stereotype of the ‘hypocritical, bigoted and unlovely Dissenter’.¹³⁹ However, by the 1890s there was a general trend towards more sympathetic depictions of Nonconformity in fiction. In the mid-1890s, the editor of the popular Nonconformist periodical, *The British Weekly*, William Robertson Nicoll, commented on this altered perception as compared with the era of Dicken’s Stiggins; ‘In most popular books of the day, dissent is glorified’. He specifically referred to the work of J.M. Barrie, Stephen Crocket and Ian McLaren, all of whom produced novels in the Scottish Kailyard [cabbage patch] tradition; sentimental stories of small town Scottish life, often featuring a minister of religion as one of the main characters.¹⁴⁰ Gavin Dishart in Barrie’s *The Little Minister* is one such example.¹⁴¹ Although the novel is mawkishly sentimental it portrays a Nonconformist minister who conquers both his own prejudices and those of his congregation to marry a gypsy woman. Nicoll points out that the writers he named had close family connections with Nonconformity; Crocket and McLaren were also ministers.¹⁴² Although Caine shared these close family connections, it did not prevent him from producing an unsympathetic portrayal of Nonconformity, specifically Methodism, in both *The Manxman* and *The Master of*

¹³⁶ *The Methodist Times*, 16 August 1894.

¹³⁷ *The Banbury Guardian*, 1 November 1894.

¹³⁸ *TFOD*, pp.123-4.

¹³⁹ Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 184-5.

¹⁴⁰ *Western Daily Mercury*, 16 April 1895; Waller, p.112.

¹⁴¹ James Matthew Barrie, *The Little Minister* (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1891).

¹⁴² Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell and David Trotter, *Edwardian Fiction: An Oxford Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.82, 257-8.

Man. Nicoll himself remained non-committal in his assessment of *The Manxman*, simply expressing the view that; ‘*The Manxman* makes a great deal of Dissent, and, as I know, the author had no intention of speaking other than appreciatively of Dissent’.¹⁴³

Caine attempted to deflect criticism away from his portrayal of Caesar. In his preface to the 1903 edition of the novel he denied that the character represented ‘a travesty of Methodism’. Caine admitted that Caesar had many unworthy qualities, but that he was true to life, reflecting ‘a type’. However, he was not intended as a caricature of lay preachers:

I have much too strong an admiration of that finest element in the success of Methodism, the element of lay help, to try to hold it up to ridicule or contempt, and I have too deep a sense of the dignity and strength of Nonconformity (perhaps the mightiest force in Great Britain at this hour) to attempt to discredit it in the person of one of its grotesque products.¹⁴⁴

Edward Callow, a Manxman resident in Tring, Herts, agreed with Caine’s description of Caesar. In a letter to the *Weekly Sun*, he wrote that:

The Scripture quoting old Caesar Cregeen is a type, the like of which the Island has many. It is in no way overdrawn [...] Caesar Cregeen is undoubtedly the best drawn character in the book – it is a masterpiece.¹⁴⁵

Inevitably, there was some disquiet expressed about this specific character on the Isle of Man. Reverend William Curry of Wellington Road Primitive Methodist Chapel, Douglas, was ‘especially indignant’ that Caesar Cregeen ‘should be put forward as a type of Manx Methodist’.¹⁴⁶ However, Caine’s depiction of Caesar escaped censure by the Manx press. *Mona’s Herald* congratulated Caine on ‘his masterpiece’, adding that ‘We [...] are glad to observe that many of the leading London and provincial papers speak in the most commendatory terms of the author and his work’.¹⁴⁷ *The Peel*

¹⁴³ *Western Daily Mercury*, 16 April 1895.

¹⁴⁴ Preface to *The Manxman*, (1897; London: William Heinemann, cheap edition, 1903) ii.

¹⁴⁵ Letter to the editor, *The Weekly Sun*, 30 September 1894.

¹⁴⁶ An undated review of *The Manxman* in the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly*, cited in the *Isle of Man Times*, 28 December 1895.

¹⁴⁷ *Mona’s Herald*, 8 August 1894.

City Guardian admitted that the character had given offence to some of its readers but the reviewer ‘could hardly imagine that Caesar [was] intended to be typical of any class of Manxman – we can see no reason for jumping to such a conclusion’.¹⁴⁸

Generally, the Manx press approved of the novel as a whole, disregarding its negative portrayal of religious practice on the Island. Instead, they chose to stress the benefits of positive publicity which *The Manxman* generated for the Island. *Mona’s Herald* printed a selection of favourable reviews from the British press under the heading ‘Advertising the Island’, and included comments taken from *The Sketch*, *Liverpool Mercury*, *Methodist Times* and *Blackpool Gazette*.¹⁴⁹ The *Peel Chronicle* and the *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* also reprinted such reviews under the same heading.¹⁵⁰ The *Isle of Man Times* featured a similar article entitled ‘As Others See Us’, which included comments from a periodical, *The Spinning Wheel*, giving information concerning the beneficial effects of *The Manxman* on the Island’s tourist industry:

Mr. Hall Caine’s wonderful book, *The Manxman*, has caused the Isle of Man to be held in great repute this season among tourists and so great has been the rush that last week 16,000 visitors arrived in one day and as a natural consequence the bread ran short.¹⁵¹

Mona’s Herald reported an influx of visitors to a mill in Sulby, in the north of the Island, the fictional home of Caesar and his family:

Hundreds of visitors during the season have inspected the Old Mill at Sulby, also the tumbledown looking house a few yards distant, which is supposed to be the place of ‘The Manx Fairy’ Inn. Mr Hall Caine, the distinguished author of *The Manxman*, has done much for Sulby, and for the Island generally. His charming description of the beauty spots of Sulby Glen and district has caused

¹⁴⁸ *Peel City Guardian*, 11 August 1894.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Advertising the Island’, *Mona’s Herald*, 22 August 1894.

¹⁵⁰ *Peel Chronicle*, 25 August 1894; *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser*, 9 November 1894.

¹⁵¹ *The Spinning Wheel*, n.d., cited in the *Isle of Man Times*, 22 September 1894.

hundreds of visitors to make one of the Northern villages their headquarters this season.¹⁵²

Clearly when considering the stance taken in local reviews the impact of Caine's writing on the economic prosperity of the Isle of Man should not be underestimated. It is evident that Caine's Manx novels were influential in attracting visitors. As a result, such considerations seemed to encourage the Manx press to overlook the contentious elements in his plots and controversial characters such as Caesar Cregeen and to focus on these positive economic factors arising from the publicity which was generated. The rural population, of course, took a different view.

***The Master of Man - 'The Story of a Sin'*¹⁵³**

The Master of Man also has a Manx setting. Although it was written some twenty-seven years after *The Manxman*, it too is a morality tale and has a similar plot relating the fall from grace of a promising young man after a sexual 'sin'. The central character is Victor Stowell, a young advocate who has a sexual encounter with an illegitimate farm girl, Bessie Collister. Victor feels obliged to marry Bessie and decides to have her privately educated to make her a more suitable partner. Victor then asks his childhood friend, Alick Gell, to visit Bessie and report on her progress. Use of Alick as a go-between also helps to maintain secrecy regarding Victor's relationship with his social inferior. Events subsequently take an unexpected turn as Bessie and Alick fall in love, leaving Victor free to marry his true love and social equal, Fenella Stanley, who is the daughter of the Island's Governor. However, Bessie is pregnant with Victor's child. Concealing her condition from Alick, she returns home to her mother and abusive stepfather to give birth, after which she accidentally kills the baby. A Primitive Methodist couple who live nearby spot her disposing of the body in the dead of night, and Bessie is arrested. She is tried for infanticide and is handed down a death sentence from a jury presided over by Victor, who has been newly promoted to Deemster. Victor acknowledges that his responsibility for Bessie's plight is making a mockery of justice and, after helping Bessie escape to America with Alick, he confesses his misdeeds. The novel ends with Victor in jail, where he marries Fenella.

¹⁵² 'Advertising the Island', *Mona's Herald*, 22 August 1894.

¹⁵³ *New York Tribune*, 18 September 1921.

He has lost everything, but gained a clear conscience and with Fenella's help will rebuild his life.

The novel's structure follows Victor's moral decline and spiritual regeneration. The first three books are entitled 'The Sin', 'The Reckoning' and 'The Consequence', and trace his fall from grace and its implications. 'The Retribution' shows Victor at his lowest ebb, facing Bessie's trial. The fifth and sixth books 'The Reparation' and 'The Redemption' chart his recovery as he acknowledges his culpability. The novel's final book is entitled 'The Resurrection', in which Victor's moral rehabilitation is complete. Its title reflects the Nonconformist emphasis on the possibility of redemption and salvation if the sinner accepts moral responsibility for his sins, heeds the voice of his conscience and is prepared to make atonement. The novel's title is also significant in this respect - as Deemster and chief judge on the Island, Victor is literally the Master of Man, but he must learn to become 'Master of Man' in another sense, by subduing his sinful human nature.

Caine is undoubtedly at his most overtly moralistic in this novel – the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, said that it was 'better than the best sermon'.¹⁵⁴ This opinion was shared by others. For example, the *Sunday School Chronicle* commented that:

The whole novel is a mighty sermon for young folk on the perils of opening life, and reveals as few pulpits can, the death wages of sin, the majesty of simple duty, and the stern demands of justice. Yet like the Gospel itself, mercy strives with justice, and in the end, love conquers.

He [Caine] has used his genius and the wide-reaching influence of fiction for the up-building of conscience and Christian character, and throughout the virtues essential to civilisation are given a lovely setting, while the devices that sap manhood and womanhood's strength and beauty are revealed in their native ugliness.¹⁵⁵

Other reviews remarked on the novel's strong moral message. The *Manchester City News* commented as follows: 'The wages of sin – that is the theme, and Stowell,

¹⁵⁴ *Lloyd's Sunday News*, 21 August 1921.

¹⁵⁵ *Sunday School Chronicle*, 28 July 1921.

however honourable and chivalrous by nature could not avoid the consequences of one misdeed'.¹⁵⁶ The sexual content of the novel excited little comment, which had not been the case with *The Manxman*, although this could be put down to the greater degree of sexual licence which had emerged during the twenty-seven years which separated the publication of the two novels. The Montreal based *Family Herald* expressed reservations regarding the sexual content of many novels by Caine, including *The Master of Man*, but pointed out that in the present 'realistic age' when 'film shows, vaudeville entertainments, the common run of magazines, street dresses and even parental and school instruction [tore down] the screenings of privacy, there may be nothing to regret':

For no preacher ever set forth more clearly, more fearfully, the awful result of a breach of the divine moral law. The author's motto in the forefront of his book is 'Be sure your sin will find you out' and terribly true does he show that to be.¹⁵⁷

Caine stresses the consequences of Victor's sin at every stage of the developing plot; the following is typical:

It was a lie to say that a sin could be concealed. An evil act once done could never be undone; it would never be hidden away. A man might carry his sin out to sea, and bury it in the deepest part of the deep, but some day it would come scouring up before a storm as the broken seaweed came, to lie open and naked on the beach.¹⁵⁸

When the jury imposes the death sentence on Bessie, which is backed by the Island's Governor, Victor decides to help her escape but realises that even if he saves her life he cannot fully atone for his sin. Victor may be preventing the judicial murder of an innocent woman, but by his actions he is committing a crime against the law itself, which as a Judge it is his duty to uphold.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, her escape with Alick 'casts the burden' of Victor's sin on Alick Gell himself, who is suspected of prison breaking.¹⁶⁰ Victor decides to confess and in doing so:

¹⁵⁶ *Manchester City News*, 30 July 1921.

¹⁵⁷ *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 14 September 1921.

¹⁵⁸ *TMOM*, p.325 (Fourth Book, Chapter Twenty-Nine).

¹⁵⁹ *TMOM*, p.421 (Sixth Book, Chapter Thirty-Nine).

¹⁶⁰ *TMOM*, p.423 (Sixth Book, Chapter Thirty-Nine).

He was like another man. Life had no terrors for him now [...] He had a sense of immense emancipation. He felt like a slave who had broken the chain which he had dragged after him for years. He was a free man once more.¹⁶¹

As is the case with Philip in *The Manxman*, Victor's moral decline is combined with adverse changes in his health and appearance; his face is described as 'haggard' and he faints.¹⁶² Later at Bessie's trial, he is 'very pale' and stumbles after suffering dizziness.¹⁶³ Again, like Philip Christian in *The Manxman*, Victor blames Fate for his predicament. Immediately after his encounter with Bessie, Victor discovers that Fenella has returned to the Island and complains; 'Fate has played me a scurvy trick'.¹⁶⁴ Later in the novel, Victor believes that Fate has again taken a hand when he decides against hearing Bessie's case, but finds that his fellow Deemster is taken ill, forcing him to adjudicate at her trial. The jury find her guilty and Victor is left with no option other than to pronounce the death sentence.

Again, like Philip Christian, Victor Stowell is not the victim of a pitiless fate, but the author of his own misfortune. He sets in motion a train of events which only recognition of his guilt and desire for atonement can halt. The sin must be uncovered in order that this atonement can happen, hence Caine's inclusion of a verse from the Book of Numbers on the novel's title page; 'Be sure your sin will find you out'. The concept of atonement was important to Caine, for instance, when Raymond Blathwayt commented that 'suffering and atonement, guilt and repentance' were 'pet themes' in his novels, Caine replied that atonement was, in his opinion, 'one of the most serious things in human life' which 'touches the heroic that is in all men'. He added:

It is the essence of Christianity, and that which differentiates it from all other religions. There is no hint of it in the Mohammedan religion, and it is quite distinct from the self-sacrifice of Buddha. No pagan morality ever got near it. It is Christian, heroic, divine.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ *TMOM*, p.446 (Sixth Book, Chapter Forty-Three).

¹⁶² *TMOM*, p.274 (Fourth Book, Chapter Twenty-Six).

¹⁶³ *TMOM*, p.341 (Fourth Book, Chapter Thirty).

¹⁶⁴ *TMOM*, p.115 (Second Book, Chapter One).

¹⁶⁵ Blathwayt, 'Ethics in Modern Fiction: A Talk with Mr Hall Caine', *Wit and Wisdom*, 22 August 1891, unpaginated.

Caine himself constantly asserted the moral impetus behind *The Master of Man*. An article published in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* was entitled ‘Sin! Why I Wrote *The Master of Man*’. He pointed out that:

Time has no power to cancel sin and the sea is not deep enough to conceal it. A man may put his secret sin behind him, and build up a new life, yet some day out of a blue sky, the bolt will fall.

The spell of sin on the spirit of man is almost overpowering. Beginning with a good conscience the sinner may go on for years to believe that every fresh sin is necessary and therefore justifiable. But the awful awakening always comes at last. I know of no case to the contrary.¹⁶⁶

The plot of *The Master of Man* bears similarities to George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859). Hetty Sorrel’s seduction by the grandson of the local squire results in a pregnancy which she conceals until her flight from home. After giving birth she abandons her new born baby, the infant dies, and Hetty is tried for its murder. However, there is no happy ending for Hetty as there was for Bessie Collister – she is transported to Australia where she dies before completing her sentence. *Adam Bede* lacks the urgent demand for justice and atonement present in *The Master of Man*. Unlike Victor, Hetty’s ‘partner in sin’, Arthur Donnithorne, cannot make amends for his wrongdoing – Eliot points out that ‘There’s a sort of wrong that can never be made up for’ and she does not attempt to assume Caine’s role as a temporal providence.¹⁶⁷ In *The Master of Man*, Victor must make amends for his deeds - it is not enough that he suffers from feelings of remorse and guilt. Caine requires that he takes action to atone for his misdeed, and save Bessie’s life. Caine claimed that he had been accused of having ‘let Bessie off altogether, and given her the desire of her heart’ (that is, reunion with, and ultimately marriage to Alick), but he did not believe that punishment for women guilty of Bessie’s ‘crime’ would benefit either the woman herself or the social order’. Instead it represented an attitude ‘as unchristian as anything can be’.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 30 July 1921.

¹⁶⁷ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859; Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1997), p.460 (Book Sixth, Epilogue).

¹⁶⁸ *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 30 July 1921.

Superstition and Sermons - Primitive Methodism in *The Master of Man*

Primitive Methodism plays a less prominent role in *The Master of Man* than in *The Manxman* but it is still a strong background presence. Bessie's mother, Liza Corteen, professes a simple faith, singing hymns as she goes about her household duties. She joined the 'Primitives' as a refuge from the hardships of life with her abusive husband. Both she and Bessie are expected to work hard on his farm and Liza is constantly reminded of the fact that Bessie is illegitimate, a 'by child'.¹⁶⁹ However, parts of the novel question how great a consolation Primitive Methodism can provide. Caine reveals its apparent hypocrisy and narrowness, by describing the sanctimonious attitude of Liza's fellow worshippers towards Bessie's illegitimacy. For this reason, Bessie refuses to join her mother at their services:

She [Liza] had tried to induce her daughter to follow her there, but Bessie had refused, having come to the conclusion that the 'locals' [local preachers] on the 'plan beg' whose favourite subject was the crucifixion of the flesh, were always preaching at her mother or pointing at her.¹⁷⁰

There is the same disapproval of secular enjoyment found in *The Manxman*; on summer Sunday evenings Bessie passes the Primitive chapel wearing her best clothes, on her way to Douglas, where she will walk on the Promenades with other young men and women and listen to the German bands playing sacred music. The Primitive class leader criticises Liza for having brought Bessie up 'like a haythen in a Christian land', before concluding that nothing better can be expected of 'a child of sin', taking every opportunity to refer to Bessie's illegitimacy.¹⁷¹

When she gives birth to and kills her child the 'Primitives' show neither Bessie nor her mother any sympathy. Instead they hold a service outside the Collister's home, with a sermon on 'carnal transgression', 'brands plucked from the burning' and the need for the 'conscious sinner' to repent 'of the sin she had committed against God'. Bessie knows that this is aimed at her, and concludes that 'The Primitives were torturing her'.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ *TMOM*, pp.27-28 (First Book, Chapter Two); p.85 (First Book, Chapter Eight).

¹⁷⁰ *TMOM*, p.84-5 (First Book, Chapter Eight).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *TMOM*, p.240 (Third Book, Chapter Twenty-Two).

The novel mentions the ‘Plan Beg’, the ‘Little Plan’, a system of chapel organisation peculiar to the Isle of Man.¹⁷³ The ‘Plan’ covered either additional services, often on week days, held in the smaller chapels or, more usually, in non-chapel buildings. Such services provided an excellent training ground for local preachers, individuals who were often in full time employment in addition to their preaching duties.¹⁷⁴ In *The Manxman*, Caesar Cregeen was a former local preacher with the ‘Primitives’ in addition to his work as a miller, before establishing his own sect. In *The Master of Man*, Will Skillicorne is a preacher and class leader as well as working his small croft.

More emphasis is placed on portraying Primitive Methodism as the religion of the superstitious and uneducated than was the case in *The Manxman*, where it is thinly disguised as Caesar’s ‘Christian’ sect. Generally, the strength of Primitive Methodism lay in the working classes, especially those in rural areas, where educational opportunities were often limited and superstitious practices were more likely to survive than in towns and cities.¹⁷⁵ Skillicorne refuses to swear an oath when he testifies against Bessie in court; as a ‘man of God’, he ‘believed the old Book said ‘‘Swear not at all’’.¹⁷⁶ However, when his cow falls sick his wife is convinced it is the result of witchcraft by the Collisters. She asks him to visit a local witch doctor and obtain a charm to ‘take off the witching’. The animal is, in fact, suffering from colic but, despite his religious convictions, Will complies with her request:

Old Will, being a class leader, was well aware that such sorcery was the arts of Satan. But if the cow died it would make a big hole in their stocking purse to buy another, so his conscience compounded with his pocket, and he agreed to go.¹⁷⁷

The witch doctor depicted in *The Master of Man* was based on a real person. The antiquarian A.W. Moore describes the Teares of Ballawhaine, Andreas, in the north of the Island, which is the setting for much of novel. They were a family of herbalists and ‘fairy doctors’ whose powers were reputedly hereditary. Moore cites an account

¹⁷³ *TMOM*, p.84 (First Book, Chapter Eight).

¹⁷⁴ ‘Circuit Plans’ <www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/plans.htm> accessed 10 October 2016.

¹⁷⁵ Helmstadter, p.67.

¹⁷⁶ *TMOM*, p.308 (Fourth Book, Chapter Twenty-Eight).

¹⁷⁷ *TMOM*, p.236 (Third Book, Chapter Twenty-Two).

from Joseph Train's *History of the Isle of Man* (1845), in which Train states that the recovery of a patient, human or animal, was often perceptible from the time their case was stated to Teare,¹⁷⁸ and in *The Master of Man*, the condition of Bridget's cow improves in a similar manner.¹⁷⁹ In his guide to Manx history, folklore and culture, *The Little Manx Nation*, Caine acknowledged that the Manx (himself included) 'were among the most superstitious people now left among the civilised nations of the world' and he referred directly to the member of the Teare family who provided the inspiration for the incident in *The Master of Man*:

There was a charm doctor in Kirk Andreas, named Teare-Ballawhaine. He was before my time, but I recall many stories of him. When a cow was sick of the witching of a woman of the Curragh, the farmer fled over to Kirk Andreas for the charm of the charm-doctor. From the moment Teare-Ballawhaine began to boil his herbs the cow recovered. If the cow died after all, there was some fault in the farmer.¹⁸⁰

Caine commented that religious life on the Isle of Man at the time of his boyhood visits, some fifty years earlier 'was more vocal than active' which accounts for the persistence of superstitious practices alongside the 'deep piety' of many Islanders. Caine described this state of affairs as a 'curious mixture of sincerity and insincerity that was often grotesque and sometimes humorous'.¹⁸¹ He admitted that:

Among local preachers I remember some of the sweetest, truest men that ever walked this world of God; but I also remember a man who was brought home from market on Saturday night, dead drunk, across the bottom of his cart, drawn by his faithful horse, and I saw him in the pulpit next morning, and heard his sermon on the evils of backsliding.¹⁸²

Caine and Nonconformity - The Attitude of a Prodigal

Caine's depiction of Methodism in both *The Manxman* and *The Master of Man* is certainly not a positive one, and at best could be described as ambivalent. When his writings are considered, his opinions generally appear to be an amalgam of

¹⁷⁸ Moore, pp.90-91.

¹⁷⁹ *TMOM*, p.237 (Third Book, Chapter Twenty-Two).

¹⁸⁰ *The Little Manx Nation*, p.131.

¹⁸¹ *My Story*, p.27.

¹⁸² *The Little Manx Nation*, p.141.

affectionate remembrance of the simple piety of the 'Primitives' plus admiration for the fact that most maintained good relations with the Established Church, and regret, even resentment, of their dislike and ignorance of his fiction.

It has been said that Caine rarely expressed humour within his novels. Allen claims he was 'entirely lacking in a sense of humour' but there are amusing situations in both *The Manxman* and *The Master of Man*,¹⁸³ mainly at the expense of the uneducated 'Primitives', or individuals who were likely to profess Nonconformity. In *The Manxman* there are a several such incidents, most of which involve Caesar Cregeen, such as his sale of his cow at the Tynwald Fair. Hypocritical and unscrupulous as ever, he knowingly sells a cow which has fits. The buyer quickly discovers this and remonstrates with an unsympathetic Caesar. Determined to recover his 'golden sovereigns', the man cuts off the cow's horns and sells it back to him as a different animal from the one that he purchased.¹⁸⁴ In *The Master of Man*, the speech and dress of the Skillicornes are mocked at Bessie's court case. The fact that Will, the man of God and a 'man of faith' who refuses to swear the oath, puts faith in a charm made of straw and 'a few good words' to cure his cow makes the jurors and the reader smile.¹⁸⁵ Many Manx Methodists who had never actually read the novels themselves would come to hear of this and it would provide further grounds for their dislike of Caine.

The author recognised the benefits which Methodism had brought to the religious life of the Isle of Man; prior to the arrival of Wesley, who 'swept the Island like a mighty wave' the clergy of the Established Church 'under the corrupting influence of the braggart court of the latest of our Lords of Man, neglected the spiritual needs of the people'.¹⁸⁶ Elsewhere, he remarks that in the early eighteenth century the clergy of the Established Church 'knew more of backgammon than of theology', tyrannising over the 'poor ignorant Manx people and fleecing them unmercifully by exacting the Church tithe'.¹⁸⁷

In adulthood Caine did, however, retain a vestigial loyalty to, and at times admiration for, Nonconformity. One of the most complete expressions of these views

¹⁸³ Allen, p.430.

¹⁸⁴ *TM*, pp.351-54 (Part 5, Chapter XIII).

¹⁸⁵ *TMOM*, p.309 (Fourth Book, Chapter Twenty-Seven).

¹⁸⁶ *My Story*, p.29.

¹⁸⁷ *The Little Manx Nation*, p.102.

was given in a speech he gave in Victoria Street Wesleyan Chapel in Douglas. The speech began with a reference to Caine's religious upbringing:

I was born and brought up a Nonconformist, and though I have never, since my early manhood, identified myself with Nonconformity, and though my religious sympathies have year by year grown so broad that my friends fear that having begun by including Jews and Roman Catholics they will end by embracing Moslems and the Latter-Day Saints, I have always regarded Nonconformity with something of the interest and yearning with which the Prodigal looks back at his home.¹⁸⁸

Caine's use of the word 'Prodigal' is significant. It suggests that despite the later catholicity of his religious tendencies he harboured a desire to return to the Nonconformist 'fold' which had been such a formative influence in his life. However, he may also have recognised that in the eyes of many Manx Methodists he was the 'Prodigal Son' who had rejected his Nonconformist heritage to earn a living by 'telling lies'. Despite these tensions in his interactions with ordinary Methodists on the Island, Caine asserted that his relations with leading Nonconformists had been 'rather close and intimate' and he continued to cite several examples, which included Hugh Stowell Brown, brother of the Manx poet and minister of Myrtle Street Baptist Chapel, Liverpool which Caine's family attended, and the Methodist minister Hugh Price Hughes. As a boy, he had 'owed much to the wise counsel and affectionate wit of the former', and more recently had been 'proud and happy' in the acquaintance of the latter'.¹⁸⁹

Caine described Nonconformity as 'the mightiest missionary force in the land, and [...] he who would do great things in England to-day must needs count with it last'. This is a clear reference to Nonconformist opposition to the 1902 Education Act, passed by the Conservative government. The Act made denominational schools, the clear majority of which were Roman Catholic or Anglican, eligible for direct support from local rates, as opposed to direct parliamentary grants. This was resented by Nonconformists because, with the exception of the Wesleyan Methodists, there were few Nonconformist schools in existence. Headed by John Clifford, the Free Churches

¹⁸⁸ *Isle of Man Times*, 12 September 1903.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

organised a campaign of passive resistance, withholding the proportion of their rates that would be used to support denominational schools.¹⁹⁰

In his speech, Caine also claimed that Nonconformity was ‘the backbone of Britain at this hour’, commanding ‘respect for its vitality and admiration for its zeal’. He lent his support to their protests against the recent legislation and told the assembled congregation that:

The Education Act is not being obeyed, it will not be obeyed and it ought not to be obeyed, because it is framed in defiance of the consciences of a part of the people.¹⁹¹

He again stressed the benefits which Wesley had brought to the Isle of Man particularly in the improvement of religious observance among the Manx, commenting:

When religion was near to its lowest ebb in this Island, when too many of the clergy were occupied with the worse than idle pleasures of a little demoralised court, and the famished people longed for spiritual good, God sent to this little neglected rock of the sea – the immortal John Wesley.¹⁹²

Caine praised the fact that Primitive Methodists made extensive use of the laity (the very class leaders and local preachers he criticised in his novels) because this eroded the barriers between the clergy and the people. Such barriers made the clergy ‘a separate class with supernatural powers and prerogatives’, which Caine considered a great danger to religion, believing, as he did, that in the long term the clergy should disappear as a separate class and ‘no man should be a preacher by profession’.¹⁹³ These words reflect Caine’s preference for a simple, non-sacramental form of worship, which he appears to have retained despite his friendships with, and admiration for, clergymen of all denominations. In a letter to Hugh Price Hughes, dated 10 September 1901, he gave a warm description of a prayer meeting held by:

[...] five old men in a disused chapel just under my house in Greeba – the sincerity, the devotion, the fervour, the language of Scripture, the complete

¹⁹⁰ Helmstadter, p.94.

¹⁹¹ *Isle of Man Times*, 12 September 1903.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Isle of Man Times*, 12 September 1903.

absence of the forms and ceremonies that usually accompany any approach to the Almighty.¹⁹⁴

Many years later Caine restated his dislike of sacramentalism. He described Jesus as a ‘nonconformist Jew’, a ‘poor workman’ who represented the ‘poor synagogue’ in ‘assailing the high priests and Scribes, the rich men and sacramentalists who were making a trade and a pretence of religion’.¹⁹⁵ Such views suggest that Caine’s Nonconformist upbringing continued to exert its influence in directing his preferred form of religious worship – simple, Bible based and uncluttered by ceremony, formal priesthood or sacramentalism. His Nonconformist background also influenced his fiction, with his insistence that the novel could and ought to teach morality, and his use of the Bible as the inspiration for his plots, which was the case with *The Manxman*.

Conclusion

Caine’s portrayal of Manx Methodism in the novels considered in this chapter is clearly influenced by his resentment at the attitude of the predominantly Nonconformist Manx towards fiction as ‘lies’, and yet simultaneously the moral fervour of his fiction clearly owes much to the Primitive Methodist tradition. Throughout the rest of Britain the increasing assimilation of Nonconformity into the mainstream of religious observance led to its better-off practitioners rejecting the avoidance of secular amusements such as reading fiction and attending the theatre as narrow and provincial. Ultimately, as Helmstadter points out, novel reading became ‘respectable’ among the less well-off, provided the novel in question had a strong religious or moral theme.¹⁹⁶ The Isle of Man lagged behind the rest of Britain as regards such social changes – perhaps due to its significant rural population and relative geographical isolation and, as a result, Caine’s frustration at the slow pace of change among the less well educated Manx, is clearly expressed through his narrow-minded Primitive Methodist characters.

Caine never completely turned away from his Nonconformist upbringing. He respected the emotional fervour of their worship, the use of laity as preachers and the way in which the Methodists on the Island co-existed with the Anglican Church and

¹⁹⁴ Cited in Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p.381.

¹⁹⁵ WIWTWP, p.31.

¹⁹⁶ Helmstadter, p.87.

he regarded them with the ‘yearning’ which the Prodigal Son felt for his home. At the same time, he was unable to accommodate their rejection of novel writing as a morally sound, ‘respectable’ profession. However, Nonconformist ethics exercised a powerful influence over his theories regarding the creation and uses of fiction. Caine never wavered from the belief that the novel should not only entertain, but morally educate, and in this manner, it could be as effective as a sermon, which made the Manx Methodist’s view of his work seem even more unjust. Ironically although the Manx Primitives acknowledged the power of the laity in helping to communicate a religious message they would not engage with Caine’s attempts to communicate such a religious message in a lay form through his novels. Thus, Caine decided against portraying the positive aspects of Manx Nonconformity; the simple devotion of the Primitive Methodist farmers and fishermen, and the fervid enthusiasm of the lay preachers which he so often admired. Instead, he chose to conflate his frustration with his aversion to sectarianism – and express it through the narrow exclusivity and unbending morality of Caesar and the Primitives, the antithesis of the gentle, tolerant Christianity favoured by Caine and exemplified in *The Manxman* by Peter Quilliam, who practices a religion he did not outwardly profess.

Chapter Two

The Anglican Church and the City

Christian Socialism and the Anglican Church

The Christian (1897) represents a milestone in Caine's career – it was his first novel with a contemporary setting, and one in which he examined religious issues of the time, particularly those faced by Anglicanism.

From the late 1870s, there was growing concern about the extent of the Anglican Church's responsibilities towards the poor. The theology of the Atonement began to be challenged by that of the Incarnation, which stressed the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Mankind, encouraging greater engagement with the poor. 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London', a pamphlet by the Congregationalist minister Andrew Mearns, which exposed the shocking conditions in the Colliers Row slum of London, acted as a catalyst spurring clergymen of all denominations into practical efforts to relieve poverty.¹ Many Anglican clergy, and those of other denominations, became members of various Christian Socialist organisations which were mostly formed during last two decades of the nineteenth century.² According to Owen Chadwick, these organisations represented a wide spectrum of Socialist opinion; '[...] some of it deeply Christian and hardly Socialist, some of it deeply Socialist and hardly Christian'.³ Many, such as the Christian Social Union founded in 1889, remained aloof from direct social action, expressing their Social Christianity in terms of general principles. Others favoured more direct engagement with the implementation of practical policies – these included the Labour oriented Christian Socialist League formed in 1906.⁴

Caine described himself as a Christian Socialist in his 1908 autobiography.⁵ He argued that crime and immorality were often the results of sub-standard housing and poor living conditions, and were not necessarily the product of any inherent lack of moral standards. In a speech delivered at Port Sunlight in 1911, he remarked:

¹ Gerald Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel' in *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. II, Controversies*, ed. by Gerald Parsons (1988; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp.39-63 (pp.49, 59).

² Parsons, p.51.

³ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part Two, 1860-1901* (1970; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), p.273.

⁴ Parsons, p.59.

⁵ *My Story*, p.38.

You cannot house people in kennels and treat them as dogs, without the certainty that they will acquire the vices of dogs. The public house, and worse places, were the natural sequel to the neglect of the home life of the people [...] In order to get the best out of the workman it was necessary to see that his home life was human and if possible beautiful.⁶

Interviewed by the American-based *Sunday Herald*, Caine clearly stated that his intention in writing *The Christian* was:

[. . .] to make a picture of what I consider to be the greatest intellectual movement of our time in England and America, the movement towards Christian Socialism.⁷

However, when specifically asked to define the term ‘Christian Socialism’, Caine was somewhat vague, replying merely that it was ‘a difficult question to answer with proper brevity’. Caine went on to say that he understood it be a movement which found expression in the predominantly Anglican Christian Social Union mentioned earlier. He described the organisation as supporting a return to ‘primitive ideas of Christian character and conduct’, according to a passage from the scriptures which stated that the Apostles ‘had all things in common, a type of approximate Communism’. Caine told his interviewer that the Christian Social Unionists of England were men attempting to ‘live the life of the poor among the poor and they have many settlements throughout the poorer districts of London’.⁸

All of this is embodied in John Storm, the central character of *The Christian*, who self-consciously reflects the aims of the Christian Social Union; an Anglican clergyman attempting to ‘return in our own day and hour to the apostolic idea of Christian life and character’, and who decides to live ‘as a poor man among the poor’.⁹ The novel opens with Storm, the son of a peer and nephew of the Prime Minister, leaving the Isle of Man in the company of his childhood sweetheart, the young orphan Glory Quayle. Both are travelling to London. Glory intends to train as a nurse; John has embraced Christian Socialism and intends to take orders in the Anglican Church,

⁶ Draft of a speech delivered by Caine on opening Port Sunlight Annual Horticultural Exhibition, 11 August 1911, Hall Caine Papers, Box 33.

⁷ *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 11 April 1897.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *TC*, p.24 (First Book, V).

against the wishes of his father, who wants him to enter politics. He takes up a curacy in affluent Belgravia, along with a chaplaincy at the hospital where Glory is based. Both of them rapidly become disillusioned with their lives in London. Glory tires of nursing and leaves the profession to pursue a stage career, whilst John, who longs to lead a Christ-like life working among the poor, is bitterly disappointed to discover that many clergymen view the Church as a pathway towards social and material advancement. His vicar, the appropriately named Canon Wealthy, lives in a sumptuously furnished apartment and prides himself on the fact that his parishioners are rich; he travels first class on the railways and encourages his curates to dress well in order that they may 'make their way' in London.¹⁰ The Canon censures John for preaching a sermon which is critical of the lax sexual morality of the upper classes, offending both Wealthy and his congregation. In addition to his discontent with the curacy John is still in love with Glory, and he is bitterly disappointed when she rejects his advances.

John seeks refuge in an Anglican monastery, the Order of the Holy Gethsemane, also known as the Bishopsgate Brothers, but he leaves after a year, recognising that he is unsuited to a cloistered life. He then decides to set up a mission in the Devil's Acre area of Soho, financed by his late mother's fortune – he neither seeks, nor is he offered, support by the Anglican Church from which he becomes increasingly alienated. He wants to work with the 'undeserving poor', a section of society often overlooked or shunned by the Church, as epitomised by Canon Wealthy. John decides to make his home in the slums, thus demonstrating that it is possible to achieve and maintain high moral standards amid poverty and squalor. He recognises that immorality and vice result from poverty and poor living conditions:

What's the use of saying to these people, 'Don't drink; don't steal'? They'll answer 'If you lived in these slums you would drink too'. But we'll show them that we can live here and do neither – that will be the true preaching.¹¹

Eventually, over thirty parochial organisations including clubs, a temperance society and a savings bank become connected with John's church.¹² He is especially preoccupied with rescuing single mothers and women of the streets, fearing that this

¹⁰ *TC*, pp.24,25,31,48 (First Book, V, IX).

¹¹ *TC*, p.395 (Third Book, XV).

¹² *TC*, p.431 (Fourth Book, I).

could be Glory's fate if she is seduced and abandoned by one of her aristocratic admirers, although these fears are unfounded as Glory does, in fact, eventually become a successful music hall artiste and actress.

After Glory's continued rejection, John takes full monastic vows but does not return to the monastery. Instead, he continues his missionary work in the slums, becoming increasingly isolated and fanatical, as he preaches against the decadence and sexual immorality of London. These sermons inspire a devout following who credit John with supernatural attributes and await God's imminent judgement on their city, a situation which provokes demands for John's arrest on the grounds that he is inciting civil unrest. However, John is also obsessed by the notion that Glory's lifestyle is sinful. He is especially jealous of one of her admirers, the young aristocrat Horatio Drake, mistakenly believing that he is Glory's lover. Masked by religious fervour John's obsession grows, and after seeing Glory and Drake together at the Derby Day races, he decides to murder Glory to save her soul. She succeeds in diverting him by appealing to his love for her. The novel ends with John's sustaining fatal injuries in a violent attack by a group of parishioners, one of whom has sold his possessions and property in mistaken expectation of the imminent arrival of the Last Judgement. Hearing of John's plight, Glory decides to leave the stage, and after a death bed marriage she continues his work with fallen women.

In addition, the novel's sensational sub-plot in which one of Glory's fellow nurses, Polly Love, falls pregnant after an affair with the loose living aristocrat, Lord Robert Ure, is particularly relevant in developing Caine's criticisms concerning the materialism of the Anglican Church and its indifference to those in need.

Clerical Influences on *The Christian*

The Christian is one of several novels published during the 1890s which feature a clergyman working in the London slums – these include Father James Adderley's *Stephen Remarx* (1893),¹³ L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895),¹⁴ and *A Child of the Jago* (1896) by Arthur Morrison.¹⁵ However, although Margaret Maison observed in 1961 that Stephen Remarx and John Storm head a 'valiant band' of young

¹³ James Adderley, *Stephen Remarx* (1893; New Delhi, India: Isha Books, 2013).

¹⁴ L.T. Meade, *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895; London and Westminster: Wells Gardner, Darzon & Co., reprinted by the British Library Historical Collection, n.d.).

¹⁵ Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (1896; London: The Everyman Library, 1996).

clergymen who ‘tackle the task of slum reform’,¹⁶ there has been little critical comment on *The Christian*, whilst the other three novels named here have all been the subject of sustained attention. Lynne Hapgood focuses on *A Child of the Jago* and *A Princess of the Gutter* in her essays dealing with Socialism, slums and the city.^{17 18} Sarah Wise, in her account of the Boundary Street slum in Shoreditch, dismisses *The Christian* as ‘a piece of piffle’,¹⁹ whilst Caine’s biographer Vivien Allen pays little attention to John Storm’s slum mission, instead deciding that the ‘Woman Question’ is *The Christian*’s main theme on the basis that Caine is also tracing Glory’s attempts to establish a career.²⁰

Caine frequently used real people, living and dead, as models for his characters throughout his work, and also carefully researched the locations for his novels. *The Christian* was no exception to this rule. The ‘Devil’s Acre’ in the novel is based on an actual slum area of that name within the City of London which had been ‘for centuries the haunt of the most terrible vice’.²¹ Such an insistence on truth to life by using real people and places may well represent a subconscious attempt to assuage his Nonconformist conscience, and to prove that despite his melodramatic plots which often stretched credibility; his fiction has its basis in fact.

The external circumstances Caine gives to the novel’s central character, John Storm, were influenced by three clergymen then working in the slums of London: Father James Adderley, Father Arthur Osborne Jay, and the Reverend Hugh Price Hughes. Caine directly acknowledged the first two:

The character of John Storm had not one, but two prototypes in life. One I will call Father J. and the other I will give his full name, the Hon. James Adderley, son of a peer. Father J. today is at work in Shoreditch and has the confidence

¹⁶ Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace* (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), p.308.

¹⁷ Lynne Hapgood, ‘Urban Utopias: Socialism, Religion and the City’, in *Cultural Politics at the Fin-de-Siecle*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (1995; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.184-201.

¹⁸ Lynne Hapgood, ‘The Reconceiving of Christianity: Secularisation, Realism and the Religious Novel 1888-1900’ in *Literature and Theology*, Vol.10, No. 4, December 1996, 329-350.

¹⁹ Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets* (2008; London: Vintage Books, 2009), p.222.

²⁰ Allen, p.254.

²¹ *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 11 April 1897; ‘Underground London’, *Household Words*, 31 January 1903.

of the thieves who inhabit a part of the slum where a policeman has never gone [Father J. is Father Osborne Jay of Holy Trinity Church, Shoreditch].²²

*Father James Adderley: 'A man who left his class to serve an ascetic ideal'*²³

Caine described Adderley (Figure 3) as an 'Oxford Man' who, after completing his degree, turned his back on the West End to live among the poor in the slums, and 'drifted towards monasticism'.²⁴ When Caine first met him Adderley was wearing the habit of an Anglican monk, with a cord about his waist, knotted three times to symbolise the monks' vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.²⁵ A similar habit is worn by John Storm in *The Christian* after taking his vows.²⁶

Like Storm, Adderley was the offspring of a peer; the fifth son of Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley. He entered the church and became the first head of the Oxford House settlement in 1882, where he remained for two years.²⁷ Adderley had been influenced by Mearn's *Bitter Cry* which he described as 'a great turning point in [his] life', claiming 'that it has 'successfully diverted the attention of the West End to the East End'.²⁸ However, he was first attracted to the monastic life and in January 1894, along with two companions, went into retreat at Pusey House to formulate the rules of a brotherhood, the Society of Divine Compassion.²⁹ ³⁰ Caine described Adderley as 'the physical likeness of John Storm', an individual who 'left his class to serve an ascetic ideal'.³¹

Adderley lived a life of austere simplicity, mirroring Storm who slept, wrapped in a cloak, on a hospital bed in a cell-like room, 'with constant disregard of comfort and convenience'.³² Father Andrew, one of Adderley's fellow brothers, remarked:

²² *The Chicago Tribune*, 24 November 1898.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *The Chicago Tribune*, 24 November 1898.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ TC, p.428 (Third Book, XVIII).

²⁷ Peter D'Alory Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914: Religion, Class and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p.82.

²⁸ James Granville Adderley, *In Slums and Society* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), pp. 16-17.

²⁹ T.P. Stevens, *Father Adderley* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1943), p.9.

³⁰ Arthur Macdonald Allchin, *The Silent Rebellion: Anglican Religious Communities 1845-1900* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.245.

³¹ *The Chicago Tribune*, 24 November 1898.

³² TC, p.431 (Fourth Book, I).

It is really wonderful the way Adderley lives. I only discovered this morning that for the last two nights he has slept under a rug on the floor to give up his bed to a sailor who has been sleeping in the house.³³

Adderley withdrew from the Society in 1897, just as Storm leaves the Brotherhood, although in very different circumstances. Storm is motivated to abandon a restricted life of prayer and contemplation for two reasons - he is unable to forget Glory, and he recognises the spiritual and material benefits of an active life in the wider community; 'Work was religion! Work was prayer! Work was praise! Work was the love of man and the glory of God!'.³⁴ According to Canon Arthur Allchin, Adderley was by temperament far too restless to remain in the enclosed life of a monastery, and during his time there he was constantly away taking missions, preaching and tramping the roads.³⁵ He identified poor living conditions as among the root causes of sin and improvidence among the poor, arguing that; 'Socialists say that the sty makes the pig, Christians vice versa. This is just one of those comfortable sayings which encourage the rich to do nothing [...]'.³⁶

Like Caine, Adderley supported Government intervention to improve the living conditions of the poor, calling for enforced confiscation of all property in the 'fever den' slum areas and the complete overthrow of the laissez faire system.³⁷ During the London Dock Strike of 1889, Adderley fed six hundred strikers at the Christ Church Mission in Poplar, and was praised by Ben Tillet, the docker's leader.³⁸ He joined the Christian Social Union but felt ill at ease with that organisation, perhaps due to its fundamental conservatism.³⁹ Other members such as B.F. Westcott 'remained aloof from, and wary of direct political action',⁴⁰ rejecting the Government intervention favoured by Adderley, who eventually became a member of the Church Socialist League from its foundation in 1906.⁴¹ He found this to be an 'ideal home',

³³ Allchin, p.246.

³⁴ *TC*, p.269 (Second Book, XX).

³⁵ Allchin, p.246.

³⁶ Adderley, pp.231-32.

³⁷ Jones, p.253.

³⁸ Jones, pp.249,254.

³⁹ Jones, p.255.

⁴⁰ Parsons, p.55.

⁴¹ Jones, p.243.

as it 'had more of a "labor" flavour than previous Christian socialist organisations such [. . .] as the CSU'.⁴²

Adderley was one of several High Church clergymen who expressed socialist sympathies. James Bentley has suggested that many felt alienated from the Church of England after the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act (1874) which led to several prosecutions for a range of offences including the use of incense and wearing of vestments. Such clergymen became outsiders relegated to the fringes of their own church and a substantial number further isolated themselves by acting to help those on the edges of society – the slum dwellers. Their peripheral position within their church would have naturally aroused Caine's sympathy and interest, given his predisposition for siding with the religious individual who stood 'outside' the traditional Church institutions.⁴³

As mentioned earlier, Adderley also produced a novel, *Stephen Remarx* (1893), in which the central character is a Christian Socialist Anglican priest with concerns about the relationship of the Church to the urban poor. Adderley described it as a 'tract', written in a few hours during a holiday, when he thought he 'would try to write about an ideal Anglican parson'.⁴⁴ Storm, though, is not an idealised character; although he is 'The Christian' of the title, he is flawed both as a human being and as a Christian. However, there are superficial similarities in the characters' circumstances. Adderley's biographer, T.S. Stevens, made the connection between *Stephen Remarx* and *The Christian*, observing that:

Hall Caine borrowed the theme and wrote a full-dress novel on it. James Adderley had much in common with John Storm and Stephen Remarx. Heroic young parsons became all the rage and Adderley was responsible.⁴⁵

Like Adderley and Storm, Stephen is the son of a peer who enters the church and is disillusioned by the materialism and indifference to poverty shown by his fellow clergymen. Stephen takes up a curacy in the parish of Dr Bloose, a supporter of 'the laws of Political Economy' who believes that the labour movement is 'a revolution,

⁴² Jones, pp.225, 255.

⁴³ James Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.89-91.

⁴⁴ Adderley, p.169.

⁴⁵ Stevens, p.84.

which ought to be put down by the government'.⁴⁶ Crucially, both Stephen and John Storm express a wish for a return to the values of first-century Christianity. Stephen intends to live 'as Christ lived, yes, even here in this nineteenth century London'.⁴⁷ John wants to 'apply Christianity to the life of our own time'.⁴⁸ Stephen, like John, decides to live among the poor. In this case it is not solely to set an example, but also to gain a more thorough knowledge of social questions 'by living contact with the poor themselves' in order 'to help them more effectually'.⁴⁹

However, despite these similarities, there are significant differences between the two novels, and their central characters. As Stephen's surname suggests, the focus of Adderley's novel is primarily political, with Remarx's political leanings set out in the first chapter. While Caine simply states that John has embraced Christian Socialism, Adderley provides details regarding Stephen's standing as a Socialist. He leaves Oxford 'brimming with social enthusiasm', takes an interest in the work of the settlements, and reads 'the Reports' on the condition of the poor, along with the work of Charles and William Booth.⁵⁰

Stephen is anxious to combat the influence of militant secularism popular with the working classes, which perceives Christianity as ineffectual, irrelevant and as having diverged from the message of its founder. An unnamed secularist speaker comments 'I look in vain for a Christ-like Christian' – hence, like Caine's Storm, Stephen aims to demonstrate to the working man that a clergyman can live a Christ-like life.⁵¹ He inserts himself into the social life of his parish, joining working men's clubs and institutes where he never speaks on a social subject 'without reminding them of Christ'.⁵²

Adderley's stress on politics within the novel reduces the slums and slum dwellers to a background presence – only the barest detail is given. Lynne Hapgood considers this failure to create any sense of working class 'mass' as a 'profound weakness' of *Stephen Remarx*.⁵³ The reader is simply informed that Stephen makes

⁴⁶ *SR*, p.13 (Chapter II).

⁴⁷ *SR*, p.61 (Chapter VI).

⁴⁸ *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, VI).

⁴⁹ *SR*, p.18 (Chapter II).

⁵⁰ *SR*, p.12 (Chapter II).

⁵¹ *SR*, p.33 (Chapter III).

⁵² *SR*, pp.26-28 (Chapter III).

⁵³ Hapgood, 1996, 347.

‘afternoon visits’ to the poor and ministers to the sick in a ‘pestilential slum’ during an influenza epidemic.⁵⁴ The main working class character is John Oxenham, a sceptical trade union activist and one of the leaders of the 1889 Dock Strike, who belongs to the ‘respectable’ artisan class. Contact with Stephen encourages him to convert to Christianity, and in discussions with other characters he conveys Adderley’s views on the need for class cooperation in the interests of a fairer, more equal society:

The truth is, we are all the same, poor and rich, very feeble imitators of Our Master. Henceforth let us lay aside mutual recriminations and work together for the common good.⁵⁵

Stephen hopes to persuade the wealthy of the West End to ‘carry out in practice the religion they already know about, but whose principles they have no desire to apply in life’, and he reminds businessmen, industrialists and investors that religion is ‘not only for Sunday’ – for example, those who hold shares in companies which treat their workers badly ought to agitate for improvements or sell out.⁵⁶ Many of the better-off disagree: ‘if what Remarx suggested about carrying out the Sermon on the Mount [was] really done, Society would break up into little pieces within a week’.⁵⁷ Similarly, Lord Erin in *The Christian* does not believe that the affairs of the nation could be conducted on the charming principle of ‘selling all and giving to the poor’.⁵⁸

An indicator of Adderley’s greater interest in the political aspects of the slum priest figure is that unlike Storm, Stephen does not work in isolation, but sets up a group of both better and less well-off who live in communal simplicity, pooling their wealth and skills for the benefit of the poor, and using his personal fortune for this purpose. Dubbed ‘The Remarkables’ by the popular press, their aims are more closely akin to Caine’s definition of the Christian Social Union than Storm’s mission in *The Christian*. Again, much of the interaction with the lower classes is politically motivated, and aimed at benefitting the deserving poor. In contrast to *The Christian*, there are no hardened gamblers, drinkers or prostitutes. Remarx and his followers hold weekly receptions at which rich and poor mix to promote better mutual understanding.

⁵⁴ *SR*, p.56 (Chapter IV); p.143 (Chapter XIII).

⁵⁵ *SR*, p.119 (Chapter XI).

⁵⁶ *SR*, p.58 (Chapter VI).

⁵⁷ *SR*, p.90(Chapter VIII).

⁵⁸ *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, VI).

Aristocrats provide holidays for workers at their country seats, and employers are encouraged to improve conditions.⁵⁹ Only once is the reader introduced to a slum dweller – in the person of Mr. Snivel, to whom Stephen tends when he collapses in the street.⁶⁰

Although Remarx is forced to resign his curacy as a result of expressing his Socialist views in the pulpit, he is never overtly critical of the Anglican Church. He does not directly accuse it of neglecting the poor and needy – poverty and want are due to the selfishness of the better off ‘who will not do God’s will on earth as it is done in heaven’.⁶¹ Importantly, there are no ‘Canon Wealthys’ in *Stephen Remarx* – it is the upper classes who frustrate the work of clergymen like Stephen, not the hierarchy of the Church itself. Stephen’s uncle, the Marquis of Alphege, who grants him a church living, complains to the Bishop of London about the ‘very disgraceful conduct’ (socialist preaching) of his ‘misguided nephew’, and insists that Stephen resigns.⁶² Adderley uses extremely gentle irony through his criticisms of the fact that amoral and purely nominal Christians like the Marquis can dispose of Church livings:

“Well, hang it,” said the Marquis with a levity scarcely consistent with the sacred duty of appointing a spiritual father for twelve thousand souls, “hang it, I don’t care who has the beastly living: all parsons are equally cussed in my eyes, nowadays.”⁶³

The two novels also differ in the attitude of the central characters to the Anglican Church. Over the course of *The Christian*, John Storm becomes increasingly embittered and alienated, criticising the Church with some rhetorical power as:

A chaos, a wreck of fragments, without unity, principle or life. No man can find foothold in it now without accommodating his duty and his loyalty to his chances of a livelihood. It is a career, not a crusade.⁶⁴

John makes two different and contradictory criticisms of the Established Church. On the one hand he resents its institutionalised careerism, on the other, he

⁵⁹ *SR*, pp.122-23 (Chapter XI).

⁶⁰ *SR*, pp.142-45 (Chapter XIII).

⁶¹ *SR*, p.19 (Chapter II).

⁶² *SR*, p.113 (Chapter X).

⁶³ *SR*, p.43 (Chapter IV).

⁶⁴ *TC*, p.422 (Third Book, XVIII).

claims that it has descended into chaotic fragmentation. Storm fails to recognise that such disunity results from the actions of individuals such as himself, who position themselves outside the Church's organisational structure to pursue their own religious agenda. In John Storm's case, this is a return to an earlier, purer form of Christianity. The resulting fragmentation is perhaps the 'dark shadow' of Caine's dream of non-institutionalised religion, and shows Caine as more imaginatively ambivalent about this ideal than some of his interviews and rhetoric might suggest. The unresolved tension between a flawed Established Church and the personalised version of Christianity practiced by Storm is a recurring theme in the novel.

Adderley's Stephen remains committed to the Anglican Church throughout, even though he is sometimes disappointed with the indifference of his fellow clergymen - he expresses deep distress at finding 'his beloved Church of England so lamentably in the second place' behind secularists who address crowds of workers on 'the Contradictions of Genesis and the Muddles of Moses'.⁶⁵ He attempts to remedy this by setting an example of a 'Christ-like Christian' and promoting class cooperation. Stephen undergoes no real heart-searching regarding the best way of living a truly Christian life – he decides on a course of action with quiet resolve and pursues it throughout the novel, in contrast to the angst and restlessness which mark John Storm's progress from curate to monk to slum priest, and his increasing isolation from the wider and increasingly hostile Church.

Both novels have pessimistic, though very different, outcomes. Stephen meets an untimely death because of a thoughtless prank carried out by an idle upper class man who throws a snowball at 'that canting idiot Remarx'.⁶⁶ It hits Stephen in the eye and he stumbles under the wheels of a carriage. Adderley accords his character the status of a martyr. Stephen is returning home from an errand of mercy when he receives his fatal injury and dies surrounded by his grieving supporters who have fallen 'under the influence' of this 'strange holy man', who bears his suffering with 'superhuman patience'.⁶⁷ The last chapter in the novel, appropriately entitled 'On the

⁶⁵ *SR*, p.123 (Chapter III).

⁶⁶ *SR*, p.147 (Chapter XIII).

⁶⁷ *SR*, p.149 (Chapter XIII).

Feast of Stephen', ends with 'the soothing monotone of the Days Epistle' from the New Testament account of St Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7.54-60.⁶⁸

In contrast, John Storm's death is far more ambiguous. John dies after an attack by a group of his disaffected parishioners, and he is deserted by the Sisters who administer his mission. The building is besieged by an angry mob demanding his arrest, aggrieved that the Last Judgement has not arrived. John's work will be continued, not by a band of devout followers inspired by his saintly life, but by Glory, who by her own admission is 'half a pagan'.⁶⁹ His attempts at returning to an earlier, purer form of Christianity fail, and he passes the last few months of his ministry in a mood of fanatical isolation, alienated from the wider Church, and questioning the motivation for his life and work. Storm never achieves Remarx's spiritual fulfilment – instead he recognises that he 'had sinned and fallen and didn't know [his] own heart and was not fit to enter into the Promised Land'.⁷⁰

*Father Arthur Osborne Jay – 'The Saviour of Shoreditch'*⁷¹

The second acknowledged influence on the character of John Storm was Arthur Osborne Jay, (Figure 4 vicar of Holy Trinity in Shoreditch, a parish which included the infamous Old Nichol slum, 'thirty or so streets of more or less rotten nineteenth century houses', and home to some 5,700 people.⁷² Church attendance was poor, and Jay initially set about attracting more worshippers by introducing shorter services, thus enabling greater participation by congregations generally unfamiliar with the prayer book. He succeeded in raising sufficient funds to build a larger church.⁷³ The new building included space for a gymnasium, a boxing ring and a men's club, offering newspapers, board games, tea and coffee. Alcohol was banned.⁷⁴ At ten o'clock every night the club premises were turned into a night refuge for homeless men. Jay interviewed every man seeking shelter, and admitted only the 'temporarily submerged', who were actively seeking employment, as opposed to those accustomed to a life of inactivity.⁷⁵ This, again, is in direct contrast to John Storm, who seeks out

⁶⁸ SR, p.150 (Chapter XIII).

⁶⁹ TC, p.347 (Third Book, IX).

⁷⁰ TC, p.536 (Fourth Book, XIV).

⁷¹ Wise, p.205.

⁷² Wise, p.8.

⁷³ Wise, p.191.

⁷⁴ Wise, pp.196-97.

⁷⁵ Wise, p.203

the undeserving poor and willingly accommodates such men in his night shelter for the homeless.⁷⁶

Jay ministered mainly to men, delegating pastoral work with females to the High Anglican Kilburn Sisters and the Low Church Mildmay deaconesses.⁷⁷ His ultimate solution to the problems of poverty and deprivation in the slums would be considered outrageous today. He accepted that his work with the poor would enjoy only limited success, and believed that many of the ‘submerged and semi-criminal classes’ of the slums possessed moral, mental or physical defects rendering them incapable of advancement. However, controversially even by the standards of the time, Jay’s answer to this problem was to forbid such individuals to have children by confining them to ‘penal settlements’ in which the sexes were kept apart.⁷⁸ Jay also promoted emigration to Canada or Australia for many of the slums’ unemployed men, arguing that they would have an improved chance of regular employment and better living standards.⁷⁹

It is difficult to understand Caine’s acknowledged use of Jay as a prototype for John Storm, given the latter’s eagerness to help the ‘undeserving poor.’ However, Caine admired Jay’s spirit of self-sacrifice in his willingness to work among the slum dwellers with little hope of bringing about improvements in the lives of the vast majority. In 1909, when writing of individuals who kept Christ’s spirit alive by their exemplary lives, Caine described Jay as:

A clergyman of the finest brain, the highest culture, the most delicate tastes, who has spent seventeen years living among the tramps and pickpockets who herd at night in the slums of Shoreditch, living among them, sleeping among them, shut off from the natural associates of his intellect and his heart, and when I go down to see him I feel that six months of his existence, with its inevitable starvation of mind and soul, would utterly destroy me.⁸⁰

Additionally, Jay was a high-profile individual with a gift for courting publicity. Whilst fundraising for his new church, he secured the attention of prominent

⁷⁶ TC, p.519 (Fourth Book, XIII).

⁷⁷ Wise, p.192.

⁷⁸ *The London*, 12 March 1896.

⁷⁹ Wise, p.204.

⁸⁰ WIWTWP, p.18.

journalists, with Frederick Greenwood producing two articles for the *Daily Telegraph* in October 1887. The first concerned 'London's Fever Nests' and featured Jay's Shoreditch parish. The second focused on Jay's work with his men's club, describing its premises, organisation and the activities offered.⁸¹ *Home Magazine* featured Jay in its series 'Men who are moving the world'.⁸² Caine, a consummate self-publicist, would not have been able to resist finding a way of linking his novel with Jay. Caine may also have been influenced to name Jay as a model for John Storm in imitation of two earlier and widely read novels which also featured fictional slum priests who were explicitly based on Jay himself – these were Father Ranald Moore in L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter*, and Father Sturt in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*.

A Princess of the Gutter, which is set in the London slums, relates the experiences of a wealthy heiress, Joan Prinsep, who discovers that a substantial proportion of her fortune is derived from the rental of slum properties. Encouraged by Father Moore, she makes her home in the slums, living among the poor to lead by example, and finances the construction of model dwellings to replace the slum properties.

A Child of the Jago was written as a direct result of an intervention by Jay. He contacted Arthur Morrison after reading his collection of short stories, *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894), which are set in the East End. Jay suggested that Morrison might find his parish a suitable subject for a book and Morrison visited the Nichol slum to gather material.⁸³ In the novel, the Nichol becomes the Jago (Jago being the place where Jay goes). The completed novel relates the story of young Dicky Perrot, whose attempts to escape the Jago lifestyle of crime and destitution are doomed to failure – in the final chapter, he dies in a fight between two rival gangs.

The fictional priests in both novels, Fathers Moore and Sturt, set up clubs (for girls as well as men in *A Princess of the Gutter*) and seek to avoid a culture of dependency among the poor. Sturt dispenses charity only to the deserving, and does so sparingly and in secret, since he does not wish to encourage the shiftlessness which is a part of the Jago lifestyle.⁸⁴ When Joan's model dwellings are completed, Moore

⁸¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 1 and 22 October 1887, cited in Hapgood, 1998, p. 195.

⁸² Wise, p.205.

⁸³ Wise, p.226.

⁸⁴ *ACOTJ*, p.79 (Chapter 14).

insists that tenants who have borrowed money for furniture repay their loans in full.⁸⁵ Like Jay, Moore promotes emigration as a means of removing the surplus population of the slums.⁸⁶

Sturt and Moore are unlike Caine's character in many respects, albeit the differences are themselves different from those between Storm and Adderley's Stephen Remarx. Political issues play no part in either *A Princess of the Gutter* or *A Child of the Jago*; neither Moore nor Sturt express any socialist sympathies, indeed quite the reverse is true, nor is there any criticism of the Church or examination of its role regarding the poor. Instead, the reader is presented with a priest who works in the slums and is seen only in this context, which is of course also the case with Stephen Remarx. The point is that, across all three texts, there is none of Storm's constant heart-searching on the responsibilities of the Church towards the poor, or on the best means of living an exemplary Christian life. However, unlike the saintly Remarx, neither Moore nor Sturt are idealised; both are types of slum priests linked to an individual [Father Jay] who was familiar to many contemporary readers.

Both characters are psychologically stronger than Storm. They adopt a stoical, less overtly sympathetic attitude to their work in the slums, and are fully conscious of what they see as their inherent superiority to their parishioners, from whom they set themselves apart. Father Moore, for example, comments that; 'It is absolutely necessary that they [the slum dwellers] should feel that you are master'. He considers it as his first duty to 'humanise' the poor, some of whom 'are little more than wild beasts'.⁸⁷ Father Sturt agrees with a visiting surgeon, who likens the Jago to 'a nest of rats, breeding, breeding, as only rats can'.⁸⁸ Both recognise the limitations of their missions in the slums – Sturt believes that 'the burden grows day by day [...] the thing's hopeless, but that is not for me to discuss, I have my duty'.⁸⁹ As for Father Moore, 'The time was far too short for him to complete the work he had set himself to do'.⁹⁰ Storm differs in that he is restless, alternating between extremes of enthusiasm and despair – he idealises both his work in the slums and the poor to whom he

⁸⁵ *APOTG*, p.233 (Chapter XX).

⁸⁶ *APOTG*, p.235 (Chapter XX).

⁸⁷ *APOTG*, p.151 (Chapter XIII).

⁸⁸ *ACOTJ*, p.140 (Chapter 28).

⁸⁹ *ACOTJ*, p.140 (Chapter 28).

⁹⁰ *APOTG*, p.117 (Chapter XI).

ministers, hence the references to his ‘glorious mission’,⁹¹ and the ‘glorious scene’ presented by the streets of the slums, which offer the opportunity to imitate Christ and ‘to give bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked’.⁹²

John Storm is alone among fictional slum priests of the period in that he absolutely refuses to settle within the church. In the first part of the novel, he removes himself physically by entering a monastery, in the second part spiritually as he withdraws from contact and cooperation with the main body of the Anglican church, and much of the novel focuses on his spiritual struggles which led Caine’s contemporaries to conclude that, unlike the slum-priest heroes of Adderley, Morrison and Meade, Caine’s John Storm was neither an exemplary Christian, nor a Socialist.

Hugh Price Hughes and the West London Mission

However, it seems certain that a third, hitherto unacknowledged, influence on the character of John Storm was Hugh Price Hughes, (Figure 5) the Wesleyan minister whose work at the West London Mission, Soho, from 1887 onwards, was clearly mirrored in Storm’s involvement with the poor girls and women of the ‘Devil’s Acre’.⁹³ Hughes was a Christian Socialist; by the mid-1880s he was the central figure in the ‘Forward Movement’, a Methodist body advocating social progressivism. He claimed to have been inspired by Mearn’s *Bitter Cry*,⁹⁴ which stirred him ‘to the depths of his being’.⁹⁵ Encouraged by Hughes’s example, his wife Katherine founded the Sisters of the People, a group of women recruited from the cultured and privileged classes. Although they did not take vows, the Sisters wore a distinctive uniform of black serge with white linen collars and a grey veil.⁹⁶ Numbers grew from three in 1887 to forty in 1894, levelling off at around twenty-five in the late 1890s, and more than sixty women served as Sisters during the first fifteen years of the Mission.⁹⁷ The Sisters undertook district visiting, familiarising themselves with individual families in the slum districts. Some were nursing sisters who ran a dispensary, others organised a

⁹¹ TC, p.341 (Third Book, VIII).

⁹² TC, p.396 (Third Book, XV).

⁹³ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a new Nonconformity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p.165.

⁹⁴ Edward Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.146.

⁹⁵ Oldstone-Moore, p.111.

⁹⁶ Oldstone-Moore, p.168.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

crèche for working mothers and women's social clubs, along with food and clothing banks. Both Hugh and Katherine campaigned on social purity issues, and were keen to expand the work of the Mission with unmarried mothers and women of the streets. Hugh supported the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, and became one of W.T. Stead's most outspoken allies in the controversy surrounding 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'.⁹⁸

Similarly, in *The Christian*, John Storm sets up a refuge housing some twenty unmarried mothers and their children, which is administered by upper class female volunteers from the West End who form themselves into a Sisterhood, and also run the girls' club set up by Storm himself.⁹⁹ It was the Sisters' work with fallen women and unmarried mothers which most interested Caine, and he donated considerable sums of money to the cause over the years. Katherine set up a 'rescue' flat at Burleigh Mansions in the heart of the West End, with her Sisters in charge, where girls could seek shelter from their pimps. According to Vivien Allen, it was rumoured that Caine had purchased the flat and presented it to the Sisters.¹⁰⁰ Caine certainly contributed to its upkeep; a letter to Caine from Katherine thanks him for a contribution of £100, and advises him that the flat is 'a very real success[...] The girls have got to know it and come here continuously'.¹⁰¹ Samuel Norris, in his monograph on Caine, states that the author paid £365 a year over a five-year period towards the rent of a hostel off Piccadilly for use as a rescue home for former prostitutes.¹⁰² Caine's interest in fallen women and single mothers seems to have been motivated by the fact that his eldest son, Ralph, was born illegitimate to fifteen-year old Mary Chandler in 1884. Caine married Mary in 1886, and Ralph's illegitimacy remained a closely guarded secret until after Caine's death.¹⁰³ It was the reason why Caine refused a hereditary baronetcy in 1917,¹⁰⁴ because the title would have passed to Derwent (Caine's younger son), thus revealing the circumstances of Ralph's birth. Caine would have recognised that Mary might well have needed the help of organisations like the West London Mission had he been unwilling or unable to marry her. Significantly, all of Caine's novels apart

⁹⁸ Oldstone-Moore, p.145.

⁹⁹ *TC*, p.360 (Third Book, XI).

¹⁰⁰ Allen, p.254.

¹⁰¹ Letter to Caine from Katherine Price Hughes, dated 1 June 1908, Hall Caine Papers, Box 55.

¹⁰² Norris, p.71.

¹⁰³ Allen, pp.171-72.

¹⁰⁴ Allen, p.367.

from *The Shadow of a Crime* and *The Scapegoat* feature a character of illegitimate birth.

Although Hugh died in 1902, Caine continued his connection with the West London Mission. Apart from his financial contributions, he sent Katherine copies of his books, including a copy of *The Prodigal Son*.¹⁰⁵ Price Hughes's successor at the West London Mission, Gordon Rattenbury, thanked Caine for a copy of an unnamed novel in a letter dated 10 August 1908.¹⁰⁶ At a performance of the 1907 stage version of *The Christian*, Katherine distributed a leaflet detailing the work of the Sisters and inviting donations from the public. (Figure 6) The leaflet describes Caine as a 'warm friend and supporter' of her late husband. The costume worn by the sisters in the play was a direct copy of the uniform worn by the Sisters at the West London Mission.¹⁰⁷ For several of the years during which *The Christian* was staged at the Lyceum Theatre, Caine paid the Sunday evening rent of the building which enabled the Reverend Rattenbury to preach there. Caine believed that his own play 'was a sermon for the other six nights of the week!'¹⁰⁸

Caine's elevated opinion of his own play of *The Christian* and his status as a prolific dramatist appears to be at odds with the negative perceptions of the stage as a respectable career for a woman as expressed by John in the novel itself. Caine's sister, Lily, was an actress who performed in many of his plays – she took the part of Polly Love when the 1897 version of *The Christian* was staged in Liverpool, and later, when the production went on tour, she played Glory Quayle.¹⁰⁹ However, in the novel, Storm describes the stage as 'a profession which is a source of temptation',¹¹⁰ a view which Caine justifies by several references to the lax sexual morals of women who work 'in the halls'. Betty Bellman, a burlesque artiste and another of Lord Robert Ure's mistresses is 'a frequent subject of innuendo and repartee'.¹¹¹ Caine also describes how the ballet girls 'plume and preen themselves for their own particular lord in the

¹⁰⁵ Letter to Caine from Katherine Price Hughes, dated 7 November 1904, Hall Caine Papers, Box 55.

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Caine from Gordon Rattenbury, dated 10 August 1908, Hall Caine Papers, Box 55.

¹⁰⁷ 'Has *The Christian* Impressed You?', Leaflet on the work of the West London Mission, issued to coincide with the opening of Caine's play *The Christian* at the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1907.

¹⁰⁸ Norris, p.71.

¹⁰⁹ Kenyon, p.122.

¹¹⁰ *TC*, p.303 (Third Book, IV).

¹¹¹ *TC*, p.179 (Book 2, VIII).

audience'.¹¹² It is also tacitly accepted that a woman will trade sexual favours to secure a part. The stage manager Mr Sefton tells Glory when he propositions her: 'In the profession we think nothing, you know'.¹¹³

However, Caine's disapproval of the stage in *The Christian* seems more closely based on his perception of music halls, and demonstrates the lingering influences of a Nonconformist upbringing. The music hall simply offered base entertainment with popular songs, dancing, comedy, and alcohol freely available during performances as Caine indicates in *The Christian*.¹¹⁴ In fact, Caine strongly believed that, in the hands of a playwright such as himself, who had a strong sense of morality, the theatre was; '[...] a place of good influence, where the nobler, and not the baser, passions were fostered; where intemperance and dishonesty were not encouraged, but constantly rebuked'.¹¹⁵

Clearly *The Christian* (both the novel and the play) fully engaged with and supported the Price Hughes's work and were influential in bolstering the work of the West London Mission, seeking to publicise this, and gain further support for similar initiatives. Caine wrote the preface to a booklet issued to coincide with a special performance of *The Christian* at the Lyceum, to which members of the clergy were invited. (Figure 7) He claimed that the invitations had not been 'at [his] instance, but to protest against the contention 'that the drama as a medium for the expression of moral ideas had no right to exist upon the stage'.¹¹⁶ Given Caine's endorsement, it is unsurprising that the fifty-eight comments in the booklet were unanimous in viewing the play as a moral force for the good, and praised the way it focused public attention on the problem of fallen women. The following, from the Rev. J. J. Brownhill, Chaplain of the London County Council Asylum, is typical:

It [*The Christian*] is a forceful expression of a much-needed lesson. The suggestion of the play is a most practical and Christ-like one, and greatly

¹¹² *TC*, p.299 (Third Book, IV).

¹¹³ *TC*, p.202 (Second Book, XI).

¹¹⁴ *TC*, p.282 (Third Book, II).

¹¹⁵ *Luton Times and Advertiser*, 2 June 1905.

¹¹⁶ 'The Christian: A Selection of Opinions by Religious Leaders and Social Workers', Produced at the Lyceum Theatre, London, 31 August 1907, pp. 3-4.

commends itself to me. The play is a great sermon, and must have great results.¹¹⁷

The play undoubtedly made an impression on one of the women whose way of life it portrayed. Sister Mildred of the West London Mission informed Caine that whilst at work on one of the Sisters' midnight missions in Piccadilly Circus, she spoke to a girl who had seen *The Christian* and was evidently reconsidering her way of life, remarking that 'if anything could get a girl to "go straight", that play ought to'.¹¹⁸

John Storm – 'earnest, pious, weak and unhinged'?¹¹⁹

In creating John Storm, Caine's stated intentions were to portray a Christian Socialist priest who wished to live a Christ-like life according to the standards of the first century. Caine's choice of *The Christian* as the novel's title naturally produced expectations that, like Adderley, he also intended to portray the definitive exemplary 'ideal' Christian – hence the subsequent adverse criticism. Reviewers and critics claimed that far from epitomizing the Christian ideal, John Storm was a disturbed, fanatical individual at odds with himself and the world. W.T. Stead concluded that 'Mr Caine's Christian is a failure as a Christian, and not much of a success as a story'.¹²⁰ Stead conceded that Caine had succeeded in painting 'a vivid and realistic' picture of contemporary life and manners', but the book's major weakness was the character of John Storm himself:

We are told at the beginning that it was to be a novel about Christian Socialism, but as the story proceeds, we have less and less of Socialism, and more and more of the struggles of an earnest, pious, weak and unhinged man with an overpowering passion for a beautiful girl.¹²¹

Stead's criticism is justified - there is only one direct reference to Christian Socialism in the novel, when the reader is told that John 'returns home a Christian Socialist' after witnessing poverty in the slums of Melbourne and Sydney during a visit to Australia.¹²² As the story unfolds, and as we have seen by comparison to Adderley's

¹¹⁷ *'The Christian: A Selection of Opinions by Religious Leaders and Social Workers'*, p.10.

¹¹⁸ Letter to Caine from Sister Mildred, dated 4 October 1907, Hall Caine Papers, Box 63).

¹¹⁹ W.T. Stead, 'The Book of the Month: "The Christian" by Hall Caine', *The Review of Reviews*, August 1897, pp. 299-305 (p.305).

¹²⁰ Stead, *The Review of Reviews*, August 1897, p.299.

¹²¹ Stead, *The Review of Reviews*, August 1897, p.305.

¹²² *TC*, p.22 (First Book, IV).

Stephen Remarx, it becomes increasingly clear that *The Christian* does not set John's actions in any clear political context. For example, John and his uncle, Lord Erin, who is also the Prime Minister, hold an inconclusive discussion regarding the possibility of governing a country in accordance with Christian teaching. John calls for a 'new social application of the Gospel', and tells his uncle that the government of a Christian country should accord with the teachings of Christ.¹²³ Erin disagrees - he thinks that it is impractical to conduct cabinet business on such 'charming principles' as 'loving your enemies' or turning the other cheek'. It was a 'harmless superstition' that Britain was a Christian nation, although it was useful in curbing the masses of the people.¹²⁴ John's argument is not developed further, which suggests either that Caine was unable to formulate a firm definition of practical Christian Socialism, or that he had no wish to openly align himself with any specific grouping at that time. Although Caine claimed to have based his concept of Christian Socialism in the novel on the mainly Anglican Christian Social Union,¹²⁵ there is no mention of John belonging to any similar organisation. He acts alone in the face of opposition from the Church Establishment, financing his mission to the poor using his late mother's fortune and with some help from his uncle, Lord Erin.

Within the novel, the attitude of the Established Church towards John raises fundamental questions regarding its willingness to work with the poor and the practicality of returning to first century Christianity and a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, with all that this implies. John's desire '[to] present Christ in practical life as the living Master and King and example, and to apply Christianity to the life of our own time'¹²⁶ encounters problems from the outset when he is appointed to a curacy in Canon Wealthy's parish. For Wealthy, the Church is a career not a vocation and he is the embodiment of the Church's indifference to poverty. He disapproves of John's strict interpretation of Christian charity, when the latter offers the shelter of his own room to a destitute old woman who has collapsed in the street.¹²⁷ Later, Wealthy condones the sexual double standard, supporting the dismissal of a young unmarried nurse, Polly Love, when her pregnancy becomes obvious. The child's father, a patron

¹²³ *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, VI).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 11 April 1897.

¹²⁶ *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, VI).

¹²⁷ *TC*, pp.31-3 (First Book, V).

of the hospital, is the philandering Lord Robert Ure, who escapes censure. Although aware of Lord Robert's scandalous reputation, Wealthy is willing to solemnize his marriage to a wealthy American heiress which will help discharge Ure's debts. On discovering that the future bride, supported by John, is reluctant to proceed, Wealthy tells her to 'put aside foolish romantic notions', as the circumstances of her marriage are 'more common than she thinks'.¹²⁸ He dismisses John's work with fallen women as an encouragement to vice, and tells him: 'For my part, I am tired of the "fallen sister". To tell the truth, I deny the name. The painted Jezebel of the Piccadilly pavements is no sister of mine'.¹²⁹ On the other hand, John recognises the economic motivation behind prostitution:

Three halfpence an hour was the average wage of a working woman in England! - and that in the midst of riches, the heart of luxury, and with one easy and seductive means of escape from poverty always open.¹³⁰

Furthermore, Wealthy purchases shares in a music hall syndicate which buys the premises used by John's mission for conversion into a theatre where Glory will perform,¹³¹ whilst in the novel's final chapters, Wealthy petitions the Home Secretary for John's arrest, arguing that his inflammatory sermons, calling down God's judgement on a decadent, materialistic London, are causing civil unrest.¹³²

Caine is clear that Wealthy's hypocrisy is rife among the clergy and sanctioned by society as a whole. Lord Erin tells John, and we are supposed to agree, that '[t]here are a great many Canon Wealthys in the Church'.¹³³ Mrs Callender, who runs a home for single mothers and their babies, also tells John of a 'wicked rector' who dies a rich man, leaving his pregnant young mistress in the workhouse.¹³⁴ As John's fortunes decline, Wealthy rises in the Church – although disappointed in his hopes of a bishopric, he is appointed Archdeacon just as John loses his women's shelter to the music hall syndicate. Glory comments:

¹²⁸ *TC*, p.91 (First Book, XV).

¹²⁹ *TC*, p.335 (Third Book, VIII).

¹³⁰ *TC*, p.320 (Third Book, VI).

¹³¹ *TC*, p.373 (Third Book, XII).

¹³² *TC*, p.437 (Fourth Book, II).

¹³³ *TC*, p.29 (First Book, V).

¹³⁴ *TC*, p.50 (First Book, XI).

It is too bad, though, to think that men like John Storm can't find room in the Church for the sole of their foot, while this archdemon is flourishing in it like a green bay leaf.¹³⁵

Wealthy's words and conduct repeatedly demonstrate Caine's central preoccupation, the difficulties of applying the standards of first century Christianity to life in the nineteenth. After John's first sermon which calls attention to the poor 'dying in want' whilst the rich are 'living lives of frivolity', Wealthy tells John that 'It was necessary to live in the nineteenth century and it was impossible to apply to its conditions the rules of life that had been proper to the first'.¹³⁶ The Anglican Church is depicted as a flawed but impregnable institution - John Storm's brand of individualism is ineffective in providing any remedy to such institutionalised corruption, and Caine leaves the issue unresolved.

Looking at contemporary criticism of the novel, John's desire to live a Christ-like life was questioned. W.T. Stead complained that the book did not preach the Gospel of Christ, but 'the melancholy and hideous spectacle of a mind unhinged by the combined but conflicting forces of love and religion'.¹³⁷ The journalist and MP, T.P. O'Connor also expressed uncertainty regarding the novel's message: 'I do not know how to take this book, it is very powerful, very eloquent, and it is difficult to lay it down from the first moment you take it in hand; but what *is* it?' He decides that Storm is preaching an impossible gospel, mistaking 'the pangs of personal jealousy for divine inspiration'.¹³⁸

Caine makes it clear that John's motives are neither solely religious, nor solely altruistic. John is certainly not an idealised figure. His love for Glory is his primary motivation, although this is not at first acknowledged to himself. John's initial decision to enter the church is due to his growing love for Glory – he recognises that he is the privileged son of a rich man, whilst she is an orphan, the granddaughter of a poor clergyman. John becomes aware of the privations of the poor, adopts plainer clothes and decides to renounce the call of the world by taking Holy Orders, which will enable

¹³⁵ TC, p.243 (Second Book, XVI).

¹³⁶ TC, p.37 (First Book, VI).

¹³⁷ Stead, *The Review of Reviews*, August 1897, p.301.

¹³⁸ O'Connor, *The Graphic*, 14 August 1897, p.488.

him to overcome the social gulf separating him from Glory.¹³⁹ However, she fails to appreciate his sacrifice. Glory despises poverty and is anxious to make her way in the world. John's religious zeal increases in proportion to his bitterness at Glory's continued rejection, and after leaving the monastery his emotions determine the direction of his work. John fears that Glory's stage career will expose her to sexual temptations, and that she will end up on the streets, seduced and abandoned by one of her admirers - hence his decision to direct his mission to fallen women and their children. His uncle, the Prime Minister, recognises the driving force behind his nephew's actions; 'One pathetic idea had fixed itself on his mind - John Storm's love of God was love of a woman, and she was fallen and wrecked and lost'.¹⁴⁰ Thus, John's focus on his mission to fallen women is actually portrayed as a displacement activity illustrating the dangers of an individual religion that purports to 'follow Christ', but is driven by the obsessions within a person's psyche. Caine tacitly suggests through the character that an institutionalised church would provide a safeguard against the fanatical excess of which John is guilty. But his own devotion to the ideal of transcending denominational factionalism to embrace an individualist religion, which also embodies 'true' Christianity, means that he cannot commit himself to this solution, resulting in an unresolved tension which pervades the novel.

At one point, prompted by Glory's short-lived desire to leave London, John considers abandoning his work to minister to a leper colony in Hawaii. He hopes that Glory will accompany him as his wife, although they will in fact live as brother and sister. The plan fails due to Glory's reluctance to abandon her career; John reacts by immersing himself in religion, returning to the Brotherhood, and taking full vows, whilst continuing to work among the poor in the wider community as a detached monk. He gains a reputation as an enigmatic figure, 'a supernatural atmosphere gathered about him as a man sent by God'. Miraculous cures are attributed to him, and John assumes Messianic status in the eyes of many:

Somebody discovered that he was born on the 25th December, and was just thirty-three years of age. Then the madness reached its height. A certain resemblance was observed in his face and head to the traditional head and face

¹³⁹ *TC*, p.22 (First Book, IV).

¹⁴⁰ *TC*, p.321 (Third Book, VI).

of Christ, and it was the humour of the populace to discover some mystical relationship between him and the divine figure.¹⁴¹

A growing expectation emerges that the sinful city will be punished by some cataclysmic event, and many individuals dispose of their property, businesses and material possessions. John's apocalyptic preaching against sexual immorality and corruption, along with his request for a National Day of Prayer, fuel the growing conviction that London has provoked God's wrath and that judgement is imminent. It is anticipated that this catastrophic event will take place on Derby Day which, for John, epitomises England's moral decline, proving that the nation 'is given over to the vice of intemperance and the mania for gambling'.¹⁴² Indeed W.T. Stead compared *The Christian* to a canvas, an amalgam of Frith's *Derby Day* and John Martin's *Last Judgement*.¹⁴³ When Storm's fellow clerics, led by Wealthy, approach the Home Secretary to demand John's arrest, Caine implicitly likens Storm to Christ when Wealthy suggests that it is preferable for one man (Storm) to be 'put under control' rather than for the Church and nation to be endangered. The Home Secretary comments that he has 'heard that sentiment somewhere before'; that is, in the Biblical account of Christ's denunciation by the Pharisees.¹⁴⁴ The tension by which a respected or charismatic religious figure is both an individualist maverick and a true embodiment of the original principles of that religion, was an issue to which Caine often returned.

In the novel's final chapters, John's conviction that Glory and her admirer Horatio Drake are lovers becomes increasingly obsessive. When he sees the couple at the Derby Day races, 'A paroxysm of jealousy tore his heart'. He is certain that Glory will become 'Drake's victim, his plaything [...] someday he would find her where he had found others – outcast, deserted, forlorn, cast down in the trough of life'.¹⁴⁵ John admits that his religiosity is a sham and it is 'For Glory's sake that he has sacrificed everything and deceived himself before God and Man'.¹⁴⁶ On the evening of Derby Day he preaches against sensuality, using a Biblical text which exhorts destruction of the flesh to save the soul. John decides to act accordingly and kill Glory to prevent her

¹⁴¹ *TC*, p.433 (Fourth Book, I).

¹⁴² *TC*, p.455 (Fourth Book, III).

¹⁴³ Stead, *The Review of Reviews*, August 1897, p.299.

¹⁴⁴ *TC*, p.437 (Fourth Book, II).

¹⁴⁵ *TC*, p.456 (Fourth Book, V).

¹⁴⁶ *TC*, p.426 (Third Book, VIII).

eternal damnation. Caine leaves the reader in little doubt that John is an unbalanced fanatic in a state of moral confusion - he oscillates between jealous rages, which he justifies by religious scruples, and an admission that Glory's murder would be a 'monstrous' act. Ultimately John concludes that he is acting for the best since the early Christians, who he wishes to emulate, countenanced such actions. He asks himself:

If it was right in England and in the nineteenth century to contemplate a course which might have been proper to Palestine and the first century, the answer came instantaneously that it *was* right.¹⁴⁷

In a climactic scene, John confronts Glory with her 'guilt' and tells her to prepare for death. However, she appeals to John's love for her and the chapter closes with the couple locked in each other's arms. The reader next sees John wandering the streets of London in the early hours, guilt-ridden and distraught.¹⁴⁸ This episode provoked much debate and controversy: many people, both reviewers and readers, assumed that Glory had saved her life by the sacrifice of her virtue. Caine received several letters on this subject from concerned readers. James Perrie of West Kensington, London, asked 'Did you intend to convey that John Storm seduced Glory? I say no. The majority of people say yes'.¹⁴⁹ Mrs M. Vandyke of Wetherby wished to know 'whether Glory remained good to the end or not. A friend of mine thinks she fell that night Storm went to her home [...]'.¹⁵⁰ The poet and journalist William Canton, was certain that Glory had 'fallen':

When I turn to John Storm and follow him through his feverish career, I am lost in bewilderment. Is this semi-delirious creature of impulse really meant for an ideal of manhood, the type of a Christian? [. . .] he is only saved from murder by succumbing to the glamour of the senses. In any man such a fall is deplorable; in this 'Christian' whose mission is the championship of purity [...] it is unforgettable and unpardonable.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ TC, p.463 (Fourth Book, VI).

¹⁴⁸ TC, pp.477-485 (Fourth Book, VIII).

¹⁴⁹ Letter to Caine from James Perrie of West Kensington, London, dated 15 November 1897, Hall Caine Papers, Box 57.

¹⁵⁰ Letter to Caine from Mrs M. Vandyke of Wetherby, dated 19 September 1898, Hall Caine Papers, Box 57.

¹⁵¹ William Canton, *The Bookman*, September 1897, p.480.

Stead was among the first to argue that Storm and Glory had embarked upon a sexual relationship in his August 1897 review. Two months later, he produced an article entitled 'An Outrage Upon Art and Upon Morals' in which he gave a detailed exposition of this view. Stead subjected Caine's description of Glory's emotional condition after the episode in question to a detailed comparison with Kate Cregeen's feelings on the morning after her seduction of Philip Christian in *The Manxman*. Stead pointed out the similarities - both women experienced a sense of mystery, intense happiness and transformation, and he concluded:

To read the story of Glory after the story of Kate, knowing that Kate succumbed, no human being could possibly draw any other conclusion than that Mr Hall Caine meant to suggest that Glory had equally succumbed to an overmastering temptation caused in her case by a sheer dread of murder.¹⁵²

Other reviewers disagreed; F.W. Farrar, the Dean of Canterbury, described Storm as 'a man of pure heart and high mind',¹⁵³ and Caine himself denied any impropriety:

There is no carnality in the relations of John Storm and Glory Quayle. There is no excuse for saying there exists anywhere so much as the suggestion of carnality, and the critic who makes the statement ought to be disvoiced. He is not an honest man.¹⁵⁴

Caine defined John Storm as a 'religious enthusiast built on the lines of the early Christians, counting the body as nothing', who had 'conceived the idea that a girl whom he loves is being demoralised by association with certain men' and determines to save her from 'moral ruin'. Glory responds in John's own terms, ending his 'spiritual frenzy' by appealing to his love for her.¹⁵⁵ However, this episode in its very melodramatic excess provides further proof of John's mentally unbalanced state and, implicitly, of the impracticality and even undesirability, of a return to 'early Christianity' which encouraged such a literal interpretation of Scripture. Lord Erin, frequently advocates moderation. For example, he advises John to marry and enjoy family life; 'And if you *are* to be in the Church, John, is there any reason why you

¹⁵² W.T. Stead, 'An Outrage Upon Art and Upon Morals', *The Review of Reviews*, October 1897, pp.418-20, (p.420).

¹⁵³ F.W. Farrar, 'The Christian', *The Contemporary Review*, October 1897, pp.484-89 (p. 485).

¹⁵⁴ Preface to the 1899 (cheap) edition of *The Christian*, viii-ix.

¹⁵⁵ Preface to the 1899 (cheap) edition of *The Christian*, ix.

shouldn't marry and be reasonable?'¹⁵⁶ Later, when John is extolling the moral superiority of a simple life lived in poverty, Lord Erin reminds him that money is necessary to fulfil his hopes of setting up a mission in the slums and that he may 'fairly' use his fortune for this purpose; 'If yours is the Christianity of the first century it has to exist in the nineteenth, you know. You can't live on air or fly without wings'.¹⁵⁷ In fact, Erin's moderation manifests itself as an unattractive worldly complacency, a reflection of his amoral venality in matters of religion. What we see is Caine refusing to provide the reader with a clear-cut resolution of this and other religious issues within the novel since, on this occasion, it appears that neither John's charismatic brand of religion nor Erin's amorality can fulfil Caine's hopes for religious reforms and the construction of his ideal Christianity.

It is not an accident that many Nonconformists seemed to be supporters of the novel. The Congregationalist minister, Dr Horton, preaching to a packed Chapel at Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, admitted that John Storm's 'mental balance was disturbed', and yet:

For some of the author's work they might be thankful, as when the evils of the polygamy sanctioned by modern society were denounced, or the perils surrounding their music halls, the national degradation of Derby Day and the spiritual dangers of an Established Church were revealed to them.¹⁵⁸

The Reverend Joseph Parker of the City Temple, Holborn, shared this view. He described John Storm as a fanatic, but admitted that clergymen like Storm 'show above all things that mistaken zeal is infinitely to be preferred to criminal indifference.' He thanked Mr Caine for his 'great and thrilling book'.¹⁵⁹

From within the Established Church, influential thinkers like Farrar believed that in *The Christian*, Caine indirectly, yet decidedly, demonstrated the impossibility of becoming a better Christian by imitating the 'externals' of Christ's life, which is the path chosen by John Storm. Instead, it was better that an individual should keep faith with the spirit of Christ's teachings, not by 'hysterical and convulsive efforts' but by concentrating on the mundane, 'the trivial need and the common task' and

¹⁵⁶ TC, p.30 (First Book, V).

¹⁵⁷ TC, p.321, (First Book, VI).

¹⁵⁸ *The Daily Chronicle*, 4 October 1897.

¹⁵⁹ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 October 1897.

accepting that mankind neither could, nor should, reject the ‘laws’ which God had ordained for human existence – marriage, family life and companionship.¹⁶⁰ If this interpretation is accepted then Caine’s choice of *The Christian* as the book’s title is at least partially ironic - a Christ-like life is an unattainable ideal. Farrar’s view is perceptive, and reinforced by events in the novel. The fate of a minor character who makes a fleeting appearance, for example, suggests that Caine did not approve of grand gestures to demonstrate religious piety or zeal. The character of Glory’s father is a clergyman who rejected the ‘common task’, leaving his pregnant young wife to evangelise in Africa where he dies, having accepted that he might ‘pass his life apart’ from her.¹⁶¹ The death of her mother leaves Glory an orphan in the care of her grandfather (an impoverished clergyman), and her maiden aunts. As she grows up she expresses resentment of religion and of the Church, which as a profession seems ‘a selfish thing’ – after all, her father had given up ‘life and love and the world’ in its service.¹⁶² Caine clearly implies that Glory’s father ought to have given priority to the ‘mundane’ and cared for his family.

Thus, John cannot be defined as either a socialist or an exemplary Christian – in fact, Caine went on to downplay these aspects of the character in the preface to the 1899 edition of the novel, in which there is no mention of Christian Socialism at all. The two main characters, Glory Quayle and John Storm, are described as:

[. . .] types, which had been brought into existence by the later half of the nineteenth century – the educated girl who has to fight the battle for life in professions which are usually controlled by men, and the young clergyman who makes an effort, however vain and pathetic, to realise in a literal sense the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁶³

Use of the phrase ‘vain and pathetic’ indicates that John’s efforts were unsuccessful and Caine concludes the preface by claiming that he had in fact set out to write ‘a story of love’. The reason(s) for this altered emphasis concerning the novel’s motivation are impossible to ascertain – but it seems to have been a reaction to critics such as Stead and O’Connor who pointed out the flaws in Storm’s character and Caine’s failure to

¹⁶⁰ Farrar, *The Contemporary Review*, October 1897, p.488.

¹⁶¹ *TC*, p.7 (First Book, II).

¹⁶² *TC*, p. 13, (First Book, II).

¹⁶³ Preface to the 1899 (cheap) edition of *The Christian*, xii.

create the ‘perfect’ Christian’. The preface, written for the ‘cheap edition’ of the novel, was primarily aimed at increasing the readership, to include those who were less likely to engage in religious or political debate, but simply wanted to enjoy a dramatic and entertaining love story – we see here Caine deploying his own reputation as a populist writer of romance, rather than as a writer interested in religious issues. Whatever his reasons, Caine was evidently aware of, and uncomfortable with, the ambiguities surrounding John’s version of Christianity, and decided to step away from his earlier assertions that the novel was primarily about a Christian Socialist priest.¹⁶⁴

The final paragraphs of the later preface in fact shift the focus of the novel away from Storm towards Glory, highlighting her spiritual conflict. In the closing chapters Caine says (implying this to be the real dramatic interest) that she must choose between worldly success and ‘the sternness of self-sacrifice’, - ‘the crown of thorns when the chaplet of flowers looks fairest’, as she abandons her career for a life of good works.¹⁶⁵ Although Glory refers to herself as a ‘pagan’,¹⁶⁶ this act of renunciation suggests that she is in fact a ‘better’ Christian than John, whose religious zeal masks a jealous possessive love.

The Established Church – Pillar of the State or a Caterpillar ‘eating out its heart and its vitals?’¹⁶⁷

Caine also examined two further issues related to religion within *The Christian*, both of which are relevant to John Storm’s attempts to return to a purer form of Christianity - Church Establishment, and the value of the contemplative monastic life.

Having been brought up in a Nonconformist household, Caine might have been expected to support disestablishment – although many of the disadvantages suffered by Nonconformists had ended by the time he was writing the novel. Payment of Church rates was no longer compulsory and the religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge had been abolished during the 1870s and would not in any event have affected Caine or his family.¹⁶⁸ By the 1890s, when *The Christian* was published, the removal of these disabilities meant that the existence of the Established Church was less important to Nonconformists than it had been. The Liberation Society, set up in

¹⁶⁴ *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 11 April 1897.

¹⁶⁵ Preface to *The Christian* (1897; London: William Heinemann, cheap edition, 1899) xii.

¹⁶⁶ *TC*, p.347 (Third Book, IX).

¹⁶⁷ *TC*, p.29, (First Book, V).

¹⁶⁸ McCleod, p.92.

the 1830s by the Congregationalist minister Edward Miall to lobby for the rights of dissenters, had declined in scope with the removal of Nonconformist disabilities, and the moral energies of Nonconformists were focused on social questions such as temperance, gambling and sexual immorality.¹⁶⁹

Within the novel Caine chose to highlight the British state, and the ‘establishment’ that runs it, as a means of examining the failings of institutionalised religion, of which the Anglican Church was the epitome, and to consider alternatives to such a structure. The subject of whether a flawed Established Church is necessary, or even desirable, for the spiritual well-being of the nation recurs, usually during Storm’s encounters with his uncle the Prime Minister. John initially considers the Church to be a ‘pillar of the state’, but his uncle is sceptical, and views it as ‘The caterpillar . . . eating out its [the State’s] heart and vitals’.¹⁷⁰ The Prime Minister does not elaborate on his comment at that juncture, but his opinions regarding the nature of the Established Church are revealed in a later chapter, when John is discussing the application of Christian principles to the government of a Christian nation. His uncle dismisses as a ‘harmless superstition’ the belief that Britain is a Christian country. He talks ‘lightly’ of the status of present day Christianity and of the views Storm had expressed regarding the role of Christianity in government:

It was true we said a prayer and took an oath on the Bible in the Houses of Parliament, but did anybody think for a moment that we intended to trust the nation to the charming romanticism of the politics of Jesus?¹⁷¹

Lord Erin goes on to describe a worldly and materialistic Established Church lacking a sound spiritual basis – in his telling, the Anglican Church was founded on Acts of Parliament, endowed and established by the State, and is staffed by a clergy, who are effectively civil servants, ‘who went to levees and hung on the edge of drawing rooms and troubled the knocker of No.10 Downing Street’. The laws of Christ are interpreted by the Privy Council, and under the direct control of a State Department.¹⁷²

However, the Prime Minister himself expresses a desire to see the separation of Church and State when he is about to leave office later in the novel, describing the

¹⁶⁹ Helmstadter, pp.75-6.

¹⁷⁰ *TC*, p.29 (First Book, V).

¹⁷¹ *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, VI).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

relationship as a ‘false one, injurious and dangerous to both alike’, with its ‘manifest impostures in sacred things, in ceremonies without spiritual significance’, and its ‘frequent disregard of principles which lie deep in the theory of Christianity’. He asserts that:

[. . .] its epicureanism, its regard for the interests of the purse, its tendency to rank the administrator above the apostle, are weeds that spring out of the soil of its marriage with the State.¹⁷³

The fact that such a prominent representative of the Establishment is shown by Caine to be so acutely aware of the Church’s shortcomings suggests that reform is necessary – but Caine provides no solutions as to how this is to be achieved. One isolated individual, such as John, whose individual interpretation is moulded by his own personal experiences will not, Caine shows, bring about any change. Reform from within is needed – and in Caine’s next novel, *The Eternal City* (1901), this is precisely the outcome when, after much consideration, the Pope effects the necessary changes and restores the spiritual health of the Roman Catholic Church.

The novel also criticises the fact that the Established Church allows its offices to be filled on the recommendations of those with few, or at best lukewarm, religious beliefs. The philandering Lord Ure has three livings in his gift and mocks the candidates for his perpetual curacy in Pimlico as a ‘sweet team’ who gather round him ‘like flies round a honeypot’.¹⁷⁴ Later, an individual known as the ‘Faro King’, who made a fortune by gambling in Paris, has become a squire ‘with a living in his gift’.¹⁷⁵ Storm’s uncle, the Prime Minister, speaks out against such patronage:

If you want to see what times the Church has fallen on, look at the advertisements in your religious papers [...] A traffic, John, a slave traffic, worse than anything in Africa where they sell bodies, not souls.¹⁷⁶

The American *Home Journal*, a magazine aimed at a female readership, recognised the social implications of this episode and agreed with the views on church livings

¹⁷³ TC, p.526 (Fourth Book, XIV).

¹⁷⁴ TC, pp.49,78 (First Book, IX; XIII).

¹⁷⁵ TC, p.473 (Fourth Book, VII).

¹⁷⁶ TC, p.376 (Third Book, XIII).

Caine was expressing. It questioned whether ‘social pests’ like Lord Robert Ure should ‘be permitted to scandalise the Most High by having livings in their gift?’¹⁷⁷

Many reviews of the novel took issue with Caine’s portrayal of the Established Church. Canton agreed that there was some need for Church reform but asked whether ‘the worst enemy of the Church of England could honestly single out Canon Wealthy as a typical clergyman?’¹⁷⁸ Farrar complained that *The Christian* gave the impression that the ‘whole work of the Church of England was hopelessly ineffectual’, and that ‘so plethoric a worldling as Canon Wealthy is a type of all the clergy who are not like the hero’. Farrar went on to praise the devotion and self-sacrifice demonstrated in the daily lives of many Anglican clergymen:

As regards faithful, continuous, self-denying labour, I know not only scores, but hundreds of clergymen, who, in far off country parishes, in bleak mountain villages, in lonely seaside hamlets, in densely crowded manufacturing centres, in black mining districts – with no hope of reward, and on pittances less than the salary of a rich man’s butler – are hurling the whole force of their energy and enthusiasm against the force of prevalent temptations.¹⁷⁹

Other reviews welcomed Caine’s criticism. The *Liverpool Review* commented:

The arraignments of the State Church with which we have hitherto been familiar have been mainly based on the plea for ‘religious equality’ as a civic principle. But we have now, we think for the first time in fiction, an exposure of the Establishment as a gigantic religious failure in relation to the social needs of the time.¹⁸⁰

The Congregationalist *Christian Commonwealth* claimed that *The Christian* would do more ‘to invalidate the State-Church system than all the organised efforts of the Liberation Society’.¹⁸¹ This review also went as far as to identify Caine as a Nonconformist, as did *The Presbyterian Journal*.¹⁸² However, in an interview with the *Daily News*, Caine denied suggestions that his Nonconformist upbringing lay behind

¹⁷⁷ *Home Journal*, 8 September 1897.

¹⁷⁸ *The Bookman*, September 1897.

¹⁷⁹ Farrar, *The Contemporary Review*, October 1897, p.486.

¹⁸⁰ *Liverpool Review*, 21 August 1897.

¹⁸¹ *The Christian Commonwealth*, 9 September 1897.

¹⁸² *The Presbyterian Journal*, 23 September 1897.

this perceived 'attack' on the Anglican Church. Unusually, he claimed affiliation to the Church of England, stating:

The fact is that I am so little a Dissenter and so good a Churchman that a few months ago I was asked to consent to my election to people's churchwarden in the church at Peel.

Caine refused the offer because frequent absences from the Island meant that he would have been unable to discharge his duties 'in a conscientious manner'.¹⁸³ Disregarding his Nonconformist upbringing and regular attendance at the Myrtle Street Baptist chapel in Liverpool,¹⁸⁴ he told the *Daily News*; 'I am not, nor have I ever been, a Dissenter'. He claimed that his father had left the Anglican Church under the influence of 'a very prominent Manxman',¹⁸⁵ not, as Caine had previously stated, because as 'a strong Protestant' he could find 'insufficient standing ground' for his Protestantism in the Established Church.¹⁸⁶

Caine's assertion that he was an Anglican may simply have been an attempt to distance himself from accusations that his Nonconformist upbringing was directly responsible for the criticisms of the Establishment in *The Christian*. It is likely that he was dismayed by the lukewarm, even negative, reception given to the novel in some quarters, and had no wish to further alienate the Anglican Church. Certain scenes in the novel had also upset music hall performers, who took issue with Caine's suggestion that their profession was inherently immoral. Although she had only read parts of the book the music hall artiste, Vesta Tilley, was unhappy with the novel's 'virulent attack' on her profession, and considered John Storm and Glory Quayle to be 'impossible personages'.¹⁸⁷

However, setting Caine's variegated religious affiliations aside, in *The Christian* he clearly puts forward the case that the Established Church's links to the state substantially compromise and reduce it. Caine provides no clear solution to the problem and, in fact, the path followed by John Storm produces an idiosyncratic version of Christianity, the direction of which is problematically determined by the

¹⁸³ *Daily News*, 5 August 1897.

¹⁸⁴ Allen, p.17.

¹⁸⁵ *Daily News*, 5 August 1897.

¹⁸⁶ 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind', *The Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

¹⁸⁷ *The Manxman*, 21 August 1897.

individual's psyche and experiences. Isolation from the supporting structure of an institutionalised church, however compromised, propagates the fanaticism and zealotry to which John falls victim.

The Monastic Life - 'To leave the world altogether' ¹⁸⁸

The increased number of Anglican brotherhoods was a further subject of growing concern during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Monasticism was perceived and resented as proof of increasing Roman Catholic influence within sections of the Church of England,¹⁸⁹ and in raising this issue in *The Christian*, Caine is deliberately entering controversial territory.

The number of Anglican Brotherhoods in England continued to rise throughout the 1890s, and included the Society of the Resurrection (1889), the Society of the Sacred Mission (1894), and the Society of Divine Compassion (1894), of which James Adderley was a founding member.¹⁹⁰ They were often the target of anti-Catholic prejudice, as Owen Chadwick remarks; 'The English people believed nuns and monks to be popish'.¹⁹¹ In his definitive study of Anglican monastic orders in the nineteenth century the Anglican priest and theologian A.M. Allchin commented:

Religious communities were, throughout the nineteenth century little known and generally suspect bodies. Occasionally the fears and suspicions, largely due to ignorance found violent expression, as for instance, in the riots at Lewes in 1861.¹⁹²

Caine considers, and ultimately rejects, monasticism as a means of leading an exemplary Christian life. Fairly early on in the novel, John Storm decides to enter a monastery, the Society of the Holy Gethsemane, (also known as the Bishopsgate Brothers) because he finds it impossible to realise his ideal of a Christian life surrounded by the distractions of the city. John is impressed by the Brother Superior's spirituality after meeting him when he is visiting a sick brother at the hospital where John is chaplain, and by the fact that the monks 'despise silver and gold and all that

¹⁸⁸ *TC*, p.115 (First Book, XVIII).

¹⁸⁹ Chadwick, p.320.

¹⁹⁰ Allchin, p.243.

¹⁹¹ Chadwick, p.507.

¹⁹² Allchin, p.176.

the blind and cheated world most prizes'.¹⁹³ The monastery represents a refuge from the materialism of London,¹⁹⁴ and Storm is motivated 'to become a religious in something more than the name; to leave the world altogether with its idleness and pomp and hypocrisy and unreality'.¹⁹⁵

In his review of *The Christian*, Farrar praised Caine's representation of the Brother Superior of the Bishopsgate Brothers as 'a good and holy man'. However, he qualified this by remarking that although the novel showed that monasticism could produce 'admirable types of saintliness' in the best characters, for the majority, who were unfitted to meet the demands of such a lifestyle, it 'fostered a hopeless misery and an unspeakable degradation'.¹⁹⁶

This prejudice is reflected in *The Christian*; on hearing that John has entered a monastery, Glory's aunt describes the Brotherhood as 'strange [...] not Catholic and yet a monastery. Most extraordinary!'.¹⁹⁷ Glory's grandfather is 'Sorry to hear that John Storm has gone over to popery, for that is what it comes to, even if he is not under the Romish obedience'.¹⁹⁸ A visiting bishop, carrying out an inspection of the monastery, tells John 'Don't despise your humanity, my son. Your Master did not despise it. He came down from heaven that he might live and work among the sinful brotherhood of man'.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, the novel reveals that monasticism all too often provided a means of escape from personal problems under a veneer of spirituality. The Society's saintly Brother Superior was:

Called to orders after an earlier career which had been devoted to the world, and according to rumour, nearly wrecked in an affair of the heart.²⁰⁰

Another of the monks, Brother Paul, took refuge in a monastery after murdering his eldest sister's seducer, whilst a third, Brother Andrew, escapes from a background of drunken violence.

¹⁹³ TC, p.69 (First Book, XII).

¹⁹⁴ TC, p.111 (First Book, XVIII).

¹⁹⁵ TC, p.115 (First Book, XVIII).

¹⁹⁶ Farrar, *The Contemporary Review*, October 1897, p.488.

¹⁹⁷ TC, p.133 (First Book, XXI).

¹⁹⁸ TC, p.159 (Second Book, IV).

¹⁹⁹ TC, p.223 (Second Book, XV).

²⁰⁰ TC, p.135 (Second Book, I).

Storm decides that entering the monastery will enable him to become a better Christian. However, Caine uses John's experiences to debate the extent to which monasticism is a good and useful way of life. Caine certainly had reservations, believing that celibacy in particular was unnatural. Interviewed by Robert H. Sherard in 1897 regarding the enactment of the Contagious Diseases Act, Caine expressed the view that 'Celibacy in armies is as unnatural as it is in religious houses'.²⁰¹ In *The Christian*, the monks talk of the women who attend the Christmas services, and John wonders 'Were they really so calm as they seemed to be, and had they conquered their natural affections?'²⁰² An article published in the *Manx Sun* made the following comment on Caine's depiction of life in the Brotherhood:

To do Hall Caine justice, he acknowledges that those men have grand ideals, that they lead self-sacrificing lives, that they are good and noble men, but – is not their means of living and working a tremendous mistake? A failure – splendid it is true, but still a failure.²⁰³

Whilst Caine demonstrates that the monks are actively trying to live a Christian life untouched by the corruption of London, his description of Storm's experiences in the monastery conveys a sense of their isolation from the wider world. To the monks, 'detached from life', John's arrival was 'an event of interest':

He knew what wars had been waged, what epidemics were raging, what Governments had risen and fallen. He might not speak of these things in casual talk for it was against the rule to discuss for its own sake what had been seen or heard outside, but they were in the air about him, and they were happening on the other side of the wall.²⁰⁴

The monks 'spoke little of the world outside, but it was clear they could not dismiss it from their thoughts'.²⁰⁵ It is not long before Storm finds the isolation stifling and begins to question the value of the cloistered existence. The Brothers are not allowed to write or to receive letters without special permission, and they are discouraged from

²⁰¹ Robert Harborough Sherard, 'Hall Caine on Social Questions', *The Humanitarian*, October 1897, pp.111-14 (p.14).

²⁰² *TC*, p.166 (Second Book, VI).

²⁰³ *Manx Sun*, 24 September 1898.

²⁰⁴ *TC*, p.138 (Second Book, I).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

forming friendships with other brothers.²⁰⁶ Even the monastery dog is rarely stroked by the brothers because it is against the rule of the Order to fix the affections on earthly things.²⁰⁷

Brother Paul's sister is the pregnant nurse, Polly Love, who is dismissed from the hospital. Paul is concerned for her well-being, but is denied permission to visit her by the Brother Superior. John questions the decision and argues that '[...] such unlimited power over the body and soul of another the Almighty could have meant for no man'.²⁰⁸ Brother Paul is powerless to help his sister – she is 'sunk already in shame and degradation' and Paul, shut in the monastery, 'has put it out of his power to save her'.²⁰⁹ Increasingly Storm feels '[...] as if he were a prisoner in a dungeon looking forward to his release',²¹⁰ and he acknowledges that greater good can be done living and working in the world outside than by prayer and fasting in the monastery.

John realises that he is degrading himself by continuing as a monk. He undertakes lengthy periods of fasting and prayer, hoping to suppress his desire to leave the Brotherhood and his feelings for Glory, which the Brother Superior mistakes for piety. This leads Storm to describe himself as a coward and a hypocrite, just as thousands of other men 'whom the Church called saints' had also been hypocrites, pacing the cloisters and asking themselves 'What am I doing here?'.²¹¹ Farrar, also believed that monasticism reversed the 'divinely appointed conditions of ordinary life', presumably marriage, family, and the companionship of others, and he concluded that this isolation could produce dangerous results, 'even in the case of noble and well intentioned men'.²¹² Ultimately, Storm decides to leave the order and use his mother's fortune to set up the mission in the Soho slums, with its emphasis on helping women and girls.

It is debatable whether monastic regimes were in reality as strict as Caine's portrayal of the Society of the Holy Gethsemane. The *Home Journal* expressed doubts as to 'whether there is a brotherhood in that [Anglican] Church where the rule of

²⁰⁶ TC, p.140 (Second Book, II).

²⁰⁷ TC, p.161 (Second Book, V).

²⁰⁸ TC, p.169 (Second Book, VI).

²⁰⁹ TC, p.146 (Second Book, II).

²¹⁰ TC, p.147 (Second Book, II).

²¹¹ TC, p.236 (Third Book, XV).

²¹² Farrar, *The Contemporary Review*, October 1897, p.488.

absolute rigor depicted by Mr Caine is so implicitly carried out', and suggested that if there were, the Archbishop of Canterbury would notice its 'vagaries' with a view to suppression.²¹³ In his research for the novel, Caine sought advice on the monastic life from two clergymen; Adderley, and the Roman Catholic cleric, Dean Walsh of Douglas. Many years after *The Christian* was published, Adderley produced a memoir entitled *In Slums and Society*, but this gave no details of any advice that he proffered to Caine on the monastic life. Adderley simply recalled that:

When I was a sort of monk, Hall Caine turned up one day to tea and inspected us. He was writing *The Christian*, and allowed me to revise the proofs, where they concerned the 'Religious Life'.²¹⁴

Walsh advised Caine on the situation regarding Roman Catholic monasteries and pointed out that Brother Paul, having confessed to a murder, ought not to have been admitted to the order and allowed to take full vows. The superior of an order had to vouch at the altar that 'the candidate so far as he knows is fit to be ordained'.²¹⁵ The head of the Bishopsgate Brothers was fully aware of Paul's crime but chose not to reveal it. He feared that even 'the saintliest soul in [the] Brotherhood would have refused to live and eat and sleep in the same house as a murderer'.²¹⁶ Walsh also remarked that 'as a rule' inmates were both allowed to speak 'about the world and the things of the world' and that English monks saw the newspapers. He also stated that 'the prohibition to pray for those in the world and to caress dogs seemed to grate on one's experience', which suggests that Caine, in his disapproval of the monastic life, exaggerated the austerity of fictional Brotherhood.²¹⁷ Certainly, life as a brother within the Society for Divine Compassion, of which Adderley was a member from 1894-97, was nowhere near as hard as Caine suggested in the novel. Adderley's biographer T.S. Stevens made the following observations on the Society's daily routine:

The Brothers lived a life of poverty among the poor. They kept regular hours of prayer and work which meant that they were able to accomplish far more than priests who know no such discipline. After the Holy Eucharist and Lauds,

²¹³ *Home Journal*, 1 September 1897.

²¹⁴ Adderley, p.176.

²¹⁵ Letter to Caine from Dean Walsh, dated 22 December 1897, Hall Caine Papers, Box 56.

²¹⁶ *TC*, p.212 (Second Book, XII).

²¹⁷ Letter to Caine from Dean Walsh, dated 22 December 1897, Hall Caine Papers, Box 56.

the Brothers partook of a sparse breakfast of bread and cocoa, while one of their number read from the Bible and some other religious books. All the housework and the cooking was done by members of the Community.²¹⁸

After dinner, there was a space for recreation. Unlike the fictional Bishopsgate Brothers, members of the Society for Divine Compassion were not isolated from the wider world. They could read newspapers and all members of the community were on the electoral roll and were expected to vote.²¹⁹ It seems that the Society played a role in the local community, undertaking secular work after Adderley's departure. In 1901, the Brotherhood established the Whitewell Press in Balaam Street along with a watchmaking shop.²²⁰ Father Andrew, one of the Brothers, wrote and produced Passion plays which were staged at the Old Vic.²²¹

So, in deciding that his character should enter a monastic order governed with such severe austerity as the Bishopsgate Brothers, Caine is further isolating John from mainstream Anglicanism, and showing that even that level of (unorthodox) institutional organization seems too much for him. Yet the problem of Storm's rejection of these institutions being driven by obsession and personal anxiety remains. Although the other fictional slum priests mentioned earlier were celibate none of them rejected marriage and family ties in the assertive manner of Storm whose protestations are ultimately shown to be due, not to a genuine commitment to asceticism, but to his confused feelings about the woman he loves.

Conclusion

The publication of *The Christian* was a significant moment in Caine's career, as he moved away from portraying religious issues in a historical context and starting to debate them in a more contemporary setting.

Caine's stated intentions in writing the novel were to depict 'a type of applied socialism' in the character of John Storm and to consider the feasibility of a return to the values of first century Christianity. However, the completed novel runs at least in severe tension to Caine's assertion. There is little mention of Socialism and the fate of

²¹⁸ Stevens, p.26.

²¹⁹ Stevens, p.27.

²²⁰ British History Online, West Ham: Industries, Paper and Printing <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6/pp76-89#h3-0008>> retrieved 17 April 2017.

²²¹ A.N. Wilson, 'A Priest who made sense of Religion', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 2007.

John Storm indicates that Caine did not think it possible, or frighteningly, even desirable, to live a Christ-like life in nineteenth century London. Storm's over-zealous pursuit of this ideal descends into fanaticism. Many contemporary reviewers agreed, hence descriptions of John as neither a Socialist or a Christ-like Christian, but a 'semi delirious creature of impulse', motivated by a passionate love, who is only saved from committing murder 'by succumbing to the glamour of the senses'.²²² In their eyes, this lack of clarity made the novel a failure.

Rather than being embraced as a literary strength, this lack of definition regarding Storm's role has led to *The Christian* being overlooked in critical appraisal. Whereas novels such as *A Child of the Jago* have a more single minded focus on the work of a clergyman in the slums, Caine moves far beyond the political issue of the Church's responsibilities towards the poor. Although the Established Church is shown to be corrupt and materialistic, Caine's alternative through Storm is shown to be just as flawed; and, indeed, comes close to portraying institutionalised religion as a safeguard against the chaotic fragmentation produced when individuals such as Storm act alone to promulgate their own form of Christianity. John is not influenced by his fellow clergymen, nor by the Anglican hierarchy, but by his own emotions and experiences which he interprets in religious terms.

In his next novel, *The Eternal City* (1901), Caine would return to the theme of Christian Socialism, and the reform of Christianity, moving beyond the individual level of a slum priest to consider the application of Biblical teachings to national government and international relations with reference to the Roman Catholic Church - to many, an even more monolithic and authoritarian institution than its Anglican counterpart.

²²² *The Bookman*, September 1897.

Chapter 3

Roman Catholicism – Religion and the State

‘A City Whose Builder and Maker is God’ – Christian Teaching and the Government of Nations

Whilst ‘*The Christian* attempted to express the perfect Christian life in the individual, *The Eternal City* (1901) goes a step further and applies the Sermon on the Mount to politics’.¹ Caine’s fellow author, Coulson Kernahan, believed that *The Eternal City* represented ‘a huge intellectual advance’ when compared to *The Christian*.²

It is clear that *The Eternal City* expands on the issues Caine considered in *The Christian* - the failings of contemporary Christianity and the feasibility of living according to the principles expounded by Christ himself. However, the novel moves beyond exploring such themes at the individual level of a Christian Socialist slum priest, to a fuller consideration of the application of Christian teaching as part of the government of nations, and to international relations - with emphasis on the global role which the Roman Catholic Church might play. The novel’s title, of course, refers to Rome - the city state. *The Eternal City* mixes politics and religion, with the biblical verse cited on the novel’s title page being especially apposite: ‘He looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God’ (Hebrews 10:11). However, Caine also takes the opportunity to examine three areas of Roman Catholic doctrine which, although always controversial, were particularly so at that time; namely temporal power, papal infallibility and confession.

As ever, Caine mixes melodramatic and religious elements. One of the central characters, David Rossi, dreams of a republic governed according to the precepts of the Lord’s Prayer. He has returned to Italy under an assumed name, after a long period of political exile in America and England, following his implication in a plot to assassinate the Italian king. Rossi takes a new identity and becomes a radical deputy in the Italian parliament, where he protests against the Vatican’s focus on the return of the Pope’s temporal power at the expense of caring for Italy’s poor.

¹ *Daily News*, 21 August 1901.

² Coulson Kernahan, ‘Mr Hall Caine’s New Romance’, *The Tatler*, 4 September 1901, p.480.

The other central character is Roma Volonna, daughter of an exiled Italian liberal, Prince Volonna. She is reputedly the mistress of Baron Bonelli, the authoritarian Prime Minister of Italy. Bonelli suspects that Rossi is a wanted man living under an assumed name. After a perceived insult to her honour by Rossi, Roma, encouraged by the Baron, decides to seduce him, thus persuading Rossi to reveal his true identity. She tells the Baron ‘Leave him to me, and within a month you shall know [...] the innermost secrets of his soul’.³ However, the couple fall in love after Roma discovers that Rossi is, in fact, her childhood companion, the orphaned Italian boy taken in from the streets by her father. As the plot unfolds it also becomes apparent that Rossi is the son of the Pope, Pius X. As a young man, the Pontiff marries a working-class girl in the face of opposition from his wealthy father, who connives at their separation. Left pregnant and destitute, the young wife gives birth to a son, David, who is placed in an orphanage after her suicide. He is ‘adopted’ whilst still young by a poor family on the Roman Campagna, and subsequently sold to an Italian criminal gang operating in London. Pius, unable to trace his son, abandons his search and decides to enter the Church.

The later chapters of the novel become increasingly sensational. Rossi organises and addresses a rally against a newly introduced punitive bread tax, which ends in violence incited by Government planted *agent provocateurs*. Rossi flees from Rome after a quickly arranged wedding to Roma, witnessed by a priest and his acolyte. However, a religious marriage is not recognised by the Italian state, which means that Roma can later testify against Rossi. Bonelli coerces Roma into denouncing Rossi to the authorities, and he is arrested on his return to Italy. He escapes from custody to confront and murder the Baron, having discovered that he has seduced Roma. She initially assumes responsibility for Bonelli’s murder to protect Rossi, who himself confesses but avoids prosecution. Italy is in the throes of political and religious turmoil – Bonelli’s death is welcomed by many of the people, the King abdicates and the Pope renounces his temporal claims. Rossi is offered a leading role in government but considers himself unfit to accept as he has killed a man. He is only briefly reunited with Roma, who is suffering from a fatal ‘congenital’ illness. After her death, Rossi disappears into obscurity.

³ *TEC*, p.32 (Part One, VI).

Caine never made the relationship between Pius X and Rossi explicit - instead the reader is given strong hints of this throughout the narrative. The similarities between the circumstances of Rossi's early life and that of the Pope's lost son are pointed out. The young noble guard who escorts Roma to an interview with Pius remarks on the strong physical likeness of Rossi to the Pontiff when he sees the bust of Rossi sculpted by Roma.⁴ Rossi's resemblance to the Holy Father is also noticed by both Roma,⁵ and the Pope himself. On his first meeting with Rossi, it seems 'as if he were looking at his own features in a glass'.⁶ They shake hands when Rossi leaves the Vatican after deciding to give himself up to the authorities as Bonelli's assassin, and the Pontiff's 'saintly face' is 'full of a dumb yearning love and pride, which his tongue might never tell'.⁷ Evidently Caine felt that closer consideration of their relationship as father and son would prove too controversial.

Some reviews pointed out that the portrayal of the fictional Pope Pius X as a widower and the father of a child might offend many Catholics. In an interview with the *Daily Mail* coincident with the novel's publication, it was suggested that this might give Catholics 'ground for grievance' against Caine, although the author himself dismissed this. He considered Pope Pius's marital status as 'neither impossible nor hurtful' and drew an analogy with Cardinal Manning, who was a widower prior to entering the Church, and a Father F ---, a member of the Passionist order who, before taking vows, had himself been a widower with two grown daughters.⁸ Dean Walsh, the leading Manx Roman Catholic and friend of Caine, was supportive of his portrayal of the Pope, commenting that it was 'a bold element in the plot' which 'could not have been carried out more delicately'.⁹ He praised Caine for the time and care he had spent in 'securing an accurate knowledge of the ritual of the Catholic Church'.¹⁰ Walsh had acted as advisor on Catholic doctrine whilst Caine was writing the novel. In a letter dated 25 August 1901, the Dean wrote to Caine with profuse thanks for a signed copy

⁴ *TEC*, p.405 (Part Seven, I).

⁵ *TEC*, p.420 (Part Seven, IV).

⁶ *TEC*, p.556 (Part Nine, II).

⁷ *TEC*, p.583 (Part Nine, VIII).

⁸ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

⁹ *The Bookman*, 17 September 1901.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

of *The Eternal City*, unsurprisingly offering Caine his congratulations on its 'brilliant success'.¹¹

However, unlike *The Christian*, this novel concludes on a positive note with a brief Epilogue set fifty years in the future. 'An old gentleman' (Rossi) stands before the tomb of Roma Volonna. Although Roma's illness and death separate the lovers, much has occurred during this time to fulfil Rossi's ambitions. After a ten-year European war with its potential for an apocalyptic purging of the old order, Rossi's dream of a European Federation, with Rome at its heart, has come to fruition. A minor character, an unnamed priest, suggests that Rossi spent the war tending to the wounded on the battlefield.¹² The monarchy no longer exists; the 'monstrous abortion of divine right' has been destroyed, and far from weakening the status of the Catholic Church, the Pope's renunciation of temporal power has strengthened its position. The Church 'has never known fifty such peaceful and prosperous years since it went back to the Gospel which forbid all formal interference of religion in worldly affairs'.¹³

The conclusion expresses Caine's firm belief in a quasi-utopian future where barriers dividing mankind from each other and from God would be broken down. In a brief article for the popular American newspaper, the *New York Journal*, Caine expressed his hope that new methods of solving internal and international disputes would 'take the place of the brutal and barbarous conflicts of war, as well as the cruel and fratricidal struggles of trade'.¹⁴ Caine also contended that the Church 'had to make its terms with the Christian Democratic movement' or lose members: 'If the Church cannot go on without the people, depend upon it, the people will go on without the Church'.¹⁵ An unnamed character in the novel makes a similar comment when speaking of Rossi's proposed reforms; 'If the Pope doesn't advance with the people, the people must advance without the Pope'.¹⁶

There were very few positive reviews in the literary press. The *Westminster Gazette*, for example, commented on 'the extremely melodramatic cast of the plot', citing incidents which strained the reader's credibility such as the Pope's sudden

¹¹ Letter to Caine from Dean Walsh, dated 25 August 1901, Hall Caine Papers, Box 56.

¹² *TEC*, p.605 (Epilogue).

¹³ *TEC*, p.604 (Epilogue).

¹⁴ *New York Journal*, 24 August 1901.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *TEC*, p.64 (Part Two, II).

decision to surrender to the government troops and abandon his temporal claims, and the 'cryptic' abdication of the King, which 'formed part and parcel of the unreality which pervades the book'.¹⁷ The novel was more warmly received by the popular press, however; the *Manchester Courier* described it as 'the strongest, the most mature and yet the most daring novel that Hall Caine [had] yet written'.¹⁸

In fact, like both *The Scapegoat* and *The Manxman*, *The Eternal City* was in essence biblically inspired. The novel is clearly based on the account of Samson and Delilah with, in the early chapters, Roma intending to seduce Rossi and bring about his downfall. Indeed, the reader is frequently reminded of the biblical narrative. The woman who keeps house for Rossi is reading the story of Samson with her son when Roma arrives on her first visit to Rossi's home.¹⁹ Later, Roma takes Rossi to see a performance of the opera *Samson* in response to an invitation from Princess Bellini that she should ask 'her own particular Samson'.²⁰ An American diplomat comments on the increasingly close relationship between Rossi and Roma; "Always the way with these leaders of revolution. It's Samson's strength with Samson's weakness in every mother's son of them".²¹ On one occasion, Roma directly compares herself to Delilah, admitting that she initially set out to betray Rossi.²² Caine believed that this Biblical account was potentially 'the foundation of a modern romance' but, for an imaginative writer, it had one flaw - the biblical Delilah was 'an unmixed traitress'.²³ Therefore, in *The Eternal City*, Roma (Delilah) undergoes transformation during the story's development and denouement. The character was described in one review as 'purified by affection',²⁴ as Roma falls madly in love with Rossi and deeply regrets her initial intention to betray him.²⁵ Although Caine held the Bible in high esteem as an 'unfailing source of inspiration' for an 'imaginative writer',²⁶ he had no scruples about modifying the stories. In *The Deemster*, he reworks the parable of the Prodigal Son. However, the prodigal, Dan Mylrea, is made to atone for his misdeeds after he falls

¹⁷ *The Westminster Gazette*, 22 August 1901.

¹⁸ *Manchester Courier*, 21 August 1901.

¹⁹ *TEC*, p.4 (Prologue).

²⁰ *TEC*, p.113 (Part Three, III).

²¹ *TEC*, p.144 (Part Three, IX).

²² *TEC*, p.249 (Part Five, II).

²³ *Colliers Weekly*, 9 March 1901.

²⁴ *Australian Christian Commonwealth*, 1 November 1901.

²⁵ *TEC*, p.248 (Part Five, I).

²⁶ 'Mr Hall Caine on The Bible', *Great Thoughts* n.d., Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook III (1901-05).

victim to a fever, and although he is forgiven, he is denied a lasting reunion with his family.

There were two versions of the novel; the six-hundred-page edition of 1901, and a four-hundred-page edition of 1902 which, significantly, omitted most of the novel's social and political content. The reasons for this lay in Caine's original conception of the novel as a drama at some time during the 1890s.²⁷ The plot to the proposed play was again loosely based on the story of Samson and Delilah and related the story of a woman who betrayed her husband, a Jewish political revolutionary living in Russia, in order to save his life. However, there was little interest in staging the drama so the script became a novel, but subsequent demands for a stage production persuaded Caine to return to the idea of a play, which opened at His Majesty's Theatre on 2 October 1902.²⁸ When asked to prepare an edition of the story 'for the use of audiences at the theatre', Caine thought himself 'justified in eliminating the politics and religion [...] leaving nothing but the human interests with which alone the drama is allowed to deal'.²⁹ The fact that the political content was considered expendable raises questions regarding the importance to Caine of the relationship between religion and the state. In fact, it may simply have been difficult for him to reflect all the political elements of a such a long novel within the confines of a stage setting, and given that most of this audience would have been more interested in the love element of the novel rather than Caine's political theorising, he took the decision to remove this aspect. Caine described his alterations as 'no easy feat' since he did not wish to discredit that part of the novel 'which expressed, however imperfectly [his] sympathy with the struggles of the poor'. Accordingly, he obtained the promise of his publisher that the original version would be left in print so long as there was a demand for it.³⁰

'Thy Kingdom Come' - The Lord's Prayer and *The Eternal City*

Moreover, on initial publication in 1901, Caine insisted that *The Eternal City* was more than a romantic melodrama with biblical decoration. He addressed an 'open letter' to the American reading public which appeared in the popular periodical, *Collier's*

²⁷ Allen, p.277; Preface to the Popular edition of *The Eternal City* (London: William Heinemann, 1902), v-vi.

²⁸ Allen, p.277.

²⁹ Preface to the Popular edition of *The Eternal City*, vi.

³⁰ Ibid.

Weekly, where he set out the book's intellectual message. The figure of Samson was intended '[...] to stand for the great power which during the nineteenth century had, more than any other, asserted its rightful place in the order of the world – I mean the power of the people'.³¹ Caine believed that this power had successfully asserted its 'rightful place' during the nineteenth century, undermining the absolutism of an old order which supported various outmoded forms of authority, including the Divine Right of Kings. However, he also believed that such authoritarian rule was attempting a final renaissance through Militarism, Imperialism and the temporal power of the Pope at the turn of the twentieth century. In *The Eternal City* Caine focuses on the latter, arguing for a truly Christian democracy with the government of nations and international relations conducted in line with the precepts of the Lord's Prayer.³² He also successfully reconciles Socialism and Christianity with a reformed Roman Catholic Church acting as a focal point for international unity.

Caine explained his reasons for setting the novel in Rome. It was 'the head centre of Christianity', which had fallen short of its founder's teaching, with priests 'neglecting their pastoral duties while their Holy Head holds gorgeous ceremonials and discourses of Temporal Power'.³³ Rome was also of symbolic importance because:

Her geographical position, her religious and historical interest, her artistic charm, and above all, the mystery of eternal life which attaches to her, seem [...] to point to Rome as the seat of the great court of appeal in the congress of humanity.³⁴

Commenting on Caine's choice of Rome as the novel's location, James Adderley expressed the view that the city and Roman Catholicism represented a 'unity of Christianity' not found elsewhere, certainly not in London with its 'divisions of Christians, the melancholies of Puritanism and the dullness of the Anglican Establishment'.³⁵ Rome is also important with regard to Caine's projected desire for a Federation of Nations governed by Christian principles, since it was the seat of the

³¹ *Colliers Weekly*, 9 March 1901.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Daily News*, 24 September 1901.

³⁴ *New York Journal*, 24 August 1901.

³⁵ *The Bookman*, 17 September 1901.

Pope and the centre of Roman Catholicism. It was a church which, attractively to him, transcended national boundaries - unlike the Anglican or Episcopalian Churches whose membership base was more narrowly defined by nationality. Thus, despite their flaws, the Papacy and Rome were ideally placed to provide the spiritual leadership of an international federation, if the Pope relinquished his temporal claims and concentrated his energies on his religious duties. Caine reflects on this in the novel when Rossi says:

I dream of a Church that will put away its temporalities, which tempt it to divide men into two classes, the rich and the poor, and into many nations, friends and foes. I dream of a Holy Father of the people who will be made spiritual sovereign on earth, not by the Holy Spirit acting on seventy Cardinals in the secrecy of sealed doors, but on the whole world in the light of heaven. This is the sublime Church and the sublime Pontiff I dream of.³⁶

Accordingly, the novel argues for a Christian democratic state:

The teaching of *The Eternal City* is that the gospel is just as binding on the State as on the individual, and that Christ's doctrine is good as politics as well as good as religion. Thus, it denounces many of the principles on which national life is based. Indeed, it cuts at the root of national life, attributing its worst evils to arbitrary power, and looking for the salvation of the nations to the principles of the Lord's Prayer working through Christian Democracy.³⁷

So, the union of church and state represents a revival of Erastianism, but in a way which incorporates religion within a vision of statehood rather than operating outside it.

The opening chapters of the novel are set against the background of Pope Pius X's Jubilee, held to mark the start of the twentieth century. The repressive Italian government faces rebellion after imposing a bread tax to fund increased military spending, and it responds to the unrest by enacting legislation to prevent even peaceful protests. Rossi fights the cause of the poor among whom he lives, sharing the hardships of their lives. One of the minor characters, Elena, the wife of his friend Bruno speaks

³⁶ *TEC*, p.471 (Part Seven, XVI).

³⁷ Souvenir of Mr Hall Caine's New Novel, *The Eternal City*, issued by William Heinemann, August 1901, p.3

of Rossi's generosity; 'He would give the chicken off his plate if he hadn't anything else'.³⁸

Rossi denounces government corruption and militarism, but his anger is also directed against the Church's neglect of the poor:

We have two sovereigns in Rome, brothers, a great State and a great Church, with a perishing people. We have soldiers enough to kill us, priests enough to tell us how to die, but no one to show us how to live [...] A great Church calls itself by His name, and a mighty kingdom, known as Christendom, owes allegiance to His faith. But what of His teaching? He said 'Resist not evil', yet all Christian nations maintain standing armies [...] He said 'Give us this day our daily bread', yet Governments tax our bread so as to nullify God's gift and give to the few the soil of the earth which belongs to all'.³⁹

Rossi establishes a semi-religious organisation, 'The Republic of Man', which he hopes will govern Italy according to the precepts of the Lord's Prayer, and eventually form part of a Federation of European states. This reflects Caine's own vision since he wished to see the establishment of such a Federation (which of course lends further significance to Rome as the novel's location). It was to be a reformed Rome (in the novel, quite literally) born out of the old - a Rome which had discarded its material ambitions to focus on the spiritual. In an interview shortly after *The Eternal City*'s publication, Caine revealed this dream, of 'a Europe in which national barriers will be broken down, war abolished and patriotism superseded by the broader spirit of the brotherhood of mankind'.⁴⁰ Much later, Caine was to support the concept of a League of Nations in the aftermath of World War I. Along with Lord Robert Cecil, he worked on the first document which set out plans for the League.⁴¹

Addressing his supporters, Rossi considers line-by-line the clauses of the Lord's Prayer and their practical application to the life of the State. 'Our Father' addresses God as the father of mankind, and therefore 'all men are brothers, and as brothers all men are equal'. It follows that there is no justification for war, national frontiers or monarchy. God alone is the source of 'all right and power'; Governments

³⁸ *TEC*, p.61 (Part Two, II).

³⁹ *TEC*, p.45 (Part One, VIII).

⁴⁰ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

⁴¹ Allen, pp.361-62.

exist to 'secure to all men their natural rights to which they are born as sons of God' and they must 'derive their power from the people governed'.⁴² The sentence 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' suggests that humanity must expect that this will take place, otherwise the Lord's Prayer is a 'cruel mockery'.⁴³ Democracy is an attempt at the practical realisation of that prayer.⁴⁴ The phrase 'Give us this day our daily bread' implies that bread, the product of the soil, is God's gift to mankind, therefore the land should belong to the whole of humanity. Hence, individual control of land and its produce is wrong and contrary to the divine will. Rossi tells his supporters that the soil, 'the patrimony of the human race is in the hands of the few to the disadvantage of the many'.⁴⁵

Rossi abhors violence; he served a six-month prison sentence after refusing to perform military service,⁴⁶ and prevents an attempt on the Prime Minister's life by one of his supporters.⁴⁷ He exhorts the poor and needy to use peaceful protests and exercise restraint:

Respect property, respect religion, the symbols of religion, the churches and the priests. Don't be hard on the soldiers; they are men like ourselves who are dispossessed of their rights and are only doing their duty. Drop the dagger and dynamite; they destroy the only weapon we can wield, the weapon of public opinion. Live in the strength of our great idea – UNITY.⁴⁸

It is only when he has been forced to flee Italy to avoid arrest that Rossi becomes temporarily disillusioned with his policy of non-violent protest, and appears to consider assassinating the young King. In a letter to Roma he reflects on the suicide of his supporter and friend Bruno, which follows the shooting of his young son by government soldiers during a peaceful demonstration. Caine shared Rossi's aversion to violence. For most of his life, despite his involvement in WW1, Caine believed that war was contrary to the true spirit of Christianity and the Churches' failure to prevent

⁴² *TEC*, pp.66-67 (Part Two, III).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *TEC*, p.278 (Part Five, VI).

⁴⁵ *TEC*, p.277 (Part Five, VI).

⁴⁶ *TEC*, p.35 (Part One, VI).

⁴⁷ *TEC*, p.217 (Part Four, XV).

⁴⁸ *TEC*, p.342 (Part Six, VI).

conflict represented yet another way in which they had fallen short of Christ's teaching, a failure he blames squarely on temporal power:

Do you think for a moment that one tenth of the wars that have been fought in the Christian world during the last 2000 years would have been possible if the Churches had not been more concerned with propping up their own temporalities than in promulgating the teaching of Christ?⁴⁹

Although Rossi no longer considers himself a 'good Catholic' he retains a strong, non-denominational faith. When the charter of the Republic of Man has been read, a supporter suggests that he has founded a new church, which will be 'A big church, too [...] the church outside the churches'.⁵⁰ However, although nothing more is heard about this 'church' in the novel it is clear that Caine was, in fact, reflecting his own religious beliefs. In October 1901, just two months after the novel's publication, Caine used this exact phrase to describe his non-sectarian views when opening a fundraising bazaar in aid of Manx Catholic Schools.⁵¹ In 1905 he told an interviewer, in answer to a question concerning his religious observance, that:

I belong perhaps, to a much larger church than the Baptist, Episcopal, or the Catholic Church - the real church, the big church, the church that stands, perhaps, above all churches.⁵²

Similar words were employed several years later, when Caine related the story of his encounter with a 'broad minded Catholic prelate', who, on discovering that he did not belong to any church, replied; 'Yes, my friend, you do; you belong to the big church, the biggest church in the world, the church outside the churches'.⁵³ The fact that these comments are attributed to a Catholic is significant; it seems to almost post a kind of apostolic succession from Roman Catholicism out to Caine's unity of Churches.

Rossi is one of many characters created by Caine who exemplify the Christian ideal more successfully than members of the mainstream churches, but who reject, or are rejected by, such forms of institutionalised religion. Certainly, Rossi himself cannot be considered anti-clerical, since he describes the Pope as a saint, 'whose life

⁴⁹ *Isle of Man Times*, 1 August 1911.

⁵⁰ *TEC*, p.68 (Part Two, III).

⁵¹ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 2 October 1901.

⁵² *New York Herald*, 30 October 1905.

⁵³ *WIWTWP*, p.42.

has been a lesson in well-doing',⁵⁴ and towards whom he feels an 'indescribable tenderness'.⁵⁵ However, he criticises the failure of the Catholic Church to help the disadvantaged, and to work towards social and political reforms which would bring about improvements in their condition:

In the midst of a social ferment such as the world has never witnessed before, what in God's name is the Church doing? Singing anthems, and misereres in Basilicas, administering and receiving sacraments, with her priests in copes of brodered gold, while a great part of the world is dying of moral and physical starvation.⁵⁶

Caine also criticised what he perceived as the Church's preoccupation with the afterlife at the expense of supporting political and social reforms which would relieve poverty in the present. A controversial speech delivered at Gorton, near Manchester, in December 1901, four months after *The Eternal City* was published, sets out Caine's views on the shortcomings of organised religion regarding social and political reform. Caine was speaking at a bazaar held to support a Parliamentary election fund, which would enable the Independent Labour Party to field a candidate. The speech, entitled 'The Press, the Churches, the Gospel and Social Questions' expressed many of Caine's religious (and political) convictions.⁵⁷ It did not target a specific denomination, but expressed Caine's belief that the Churches in general had failed to support representative government and political progress. Instead, they considered the existing order of society to be 'divinely ordained', and that:

Any attempt to alter it was a wicked effort to disturb the scheme of the Creator [...] Conscious of the misery of the world, of the shocking inequalities of wealth and poverty, and of fearful want and frightful luxury existing side by side, the Churches appeared to have despaired of altering anything to any purpose.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *TEC*, p.64 (Part Two, III).

⁵⁵ *TEC*, p.431 (Part Seven, VI).

⁵⁶ *TEC*, p.431 (Part Seven, VI).

⁵⁷ Supplement to the *Manchester Courier*, 14 December 1901.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

For Caine, spiritual authority should trump political authority but not in such a way as to allow withdrawal from the political process and framework – which Caine sees as the error of the Churches at the turn of the twentieth century.

Many Nonconformist clergymen took issue with Caine regarding the content of the speech. The Reverend D. Inglis, of Finch Hill Congregational Church in Douglas, believed that whilst there was some truth in the remarks when aimed at the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, Caine had been unjust to the Free Churches which were currently ‘more and more engaged’ in the provision of social services intended to better the condition of the poor.⁵⁹ Despite extensive research, it has not proved possible to find examples of how (if at all) the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches reacted to the criticism expressed in Caine’s speech.

Confusingly however, speaking at the Catholic fund raising bazaar in Douglas two months earlier, Caine had praised Leo XIII’s encyclical *De Rerum Novarum*, which addressed the relations of capital and labour. He described the Catholic Church as the ‘church of the poor’, which had ‘cast in its lot with the poor and the lowly’.⁶⁰ Caine recognised the ‘very laborious and often very thankless’ work of parish priests and the Sisters of Mercy who loved and walked among the poor, ‘giving the sacrifice of their lives on the great pacific battlefields of religion’. Their devotion proved that the ‘Catholic Church is in its essence divine’.⁶¹

His remarks in his Gorton speech can be more easily reconciled with his conciliatory stance at the Catholic bazaar when taking account of his personal respect for those clergy, the ‘slum priests’, who worked directly with the poor at ‘grass roots’ level. However, what is important is that he was still keen to praise the Roman Catholic church for directly engaging with the poor, and even to find certain areas of exception to the apoliticism that he criticized in modern religion.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, although Caine described himself as a Christian Socialist, his definitions of Socialism were indeterminate. When writing *The Christian*, he defined Christian Socialism in religious terms, with reference to the Anglican Christian Social Union, whose members like the apostles ‘held all things in

⁵⁹ *Isle of Man Times*, 28 December 1901.

⁶⁰ *Manx Sun*, 5 October 1901.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

common' which, according to Caine, was a type of 'approximate communism'.⁶² After publication of *The Eternal City*, he gave a similarly indeterminate definition of Rossi's Socialist creed, this time from a political perspective; it was 'not Communism' but at the same time 'not Socialism according to any system yet formulated for the world'.⁶³ A further example of Caine's vaguely defined political beliefs is provided by a speech he delivered in November 1904, when he was represented as a 'political cosmopolitan'.⁶⁴ Addressing his constituents at the Hydro Hotel in Ramsey on the Isle of Man, Caine described himself as Republican, Democrat, Socialist and Monarchist. He was convinced that a Republic was a perfect form of government in which men were free and equal, democracy recognised the people as 'the only true authority', and the Socialist belief in 'the spirit of brotherhood' would one day 'make international war an impossibility'. Caine then continued to praise the work of the British monarchy, which, he claimed 'was doing the work of all three principles' in England, and had 'taken on a new lease of life in Europe'.⁶⁵ Caine often projected his hopes for unity and harmony into a millennial future which held hope and redemption, hence the ending of *The Eternal City* – a similar millennial theme occurs in *The Christian*, with John Storm's belief in divine judgement preceding reform of a corrupt church and society. In fact, Caine looked upon the turn of the twentieth century as a milestone, heralding peace, unity and progress but without strife or war. Ultimately his optimism proved unfounded, but when presenting prizes at Nelson Technical School, he delivered a speech in which he expressed his hopes of a 'century of humanity' with universal improvements in housing, health and political status for the working man.⁶⁶

Of course, other characters in the novel disagree with Rossi's politics. Baron Bonelli, Italy's prime minister, believes that the creed and charter for Rossi's Republic of Man is 'a vaporous dream',⁶⁷ 'as full of mummary as old as the Vatican'.⁶⁸ The

⁶² *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, 11 April 1897.

⁶³ 'A Message for the Times', Letter from Caine, dated 24 September 1901, to Arthur Spurgeon, which was read by Mr Spurgeon at a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Guild held in the New City Assembly Rooms, Norwich, on 30 September 1901.

⁶⁴ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 November 1904.

⁶⁵ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 November 1904; *The Daily Chronicle*, 24 November 1904; *Liverpool Echo*, 24 November 1904.

⁶⁶ 'Hall Caine at Nelson: The Old and the New Century', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 30 November 1900.

⁶⁷ *TEC*, p.35 (Part One, VI).

⁶⁸ *TEC*, p.111 (Part Three, II).

Vatican and the Pope take issue with Rossi's emphasis on the ability of mankind, undirected by the Church, to bring about positive social change:

True and lasting reforms, such as affect the whole human family can only be accomplished by God and by the authority of His Holy Church and Pontificate, and [...] it must be the bell of St Peters which announces them to the world.⁶⁹

Some reviews were similarly critical of the portrayal of Rossi's creed and projected reforms. The *Westminster Gazette* dismissed them as 'the sorriest claptrap'.⁷⁰ Unsurprisingly, the *Catholic Herald* insisted on the importance of the Catholic Church's authority and firmly rejected the concept of continuity between a reformed Catholic church and Caine's dream of a European Federation:

No intelligent person will be brought to supersede the great spiritual and moral agencies of the Catholic Church so that the millennium of the novelist's imagination may be brought in as a result of David Rossi's unreal and turgid harangues and proclamations.⁷¹

On the other hand, Nonconformists influenced by ministers such as Hugh Price Hughes, who preached a social gospel, took a more positive view, chiefly in respect of the notion of government in accordance with the tenets of the Lord's Prayer. The *Baptist Times and Freeman* found itself:

Entirely in sympathy with the contention that the ideal relations presupposed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ should shape and determine the practiced living of the present, that the Lord's Prayer, or rather the Master's teaching as a whole – should be recognised as forming the basis not merely of theology but of sociology.⁷²

Nonconformist interest in Rossi's plans for a Republic of Man was shown by a request from one Arthur Spurgeon, who intended to address the sessional opening meeting of a Methodist organisation, the New City Young Men's Guild in Norwich on 'David Rossi's Creed as A Message for the Times'. Spurgeon wrote to Caine asking for a

⁶⁹ *TEC*, p.480 (Part Seven, XIX).

⁷⁰ *The Westminster Gazette*, 22 August 1901.

⁷¹ *Catholic Herald*, 30 August 1901.

⁷² *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 4 October 1901.

short message to accompany the address.⁷³ Caine's reply reiterated the creed as stated in the novel – its basis in the Lord's Prayer, the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of mankind. He admitted that the creed 'carried us beyond the condition and possibilities of our time', suggesting that he did not think it could be put into effect in the short term. However, he provided a 'message for the present hour' which contained the essence of the creed, along with measures for practical application such as common ownership of the land, settlement of international differences by a court of arbitration, and a reminder that 'the precepts of Christ' were good for politics as well as religion'.⁷⁴ Spurgeon took up Caine's message, describing *The Eternal City* as 'a clarion call to men to save humanity', and stressing the need for Christian men and women to revert to 'the first principles of their religion'.⁷⁵

Events within the novel itself clearly suggest that Caine believed that the coming of Rossi's Republic would not be achieved easily or painlessly. Rossi rejects violence in the first part of the text. He finds it difficult to restrain his supporters but does manage to thwart their plot to assassinate the Prime Minister.⁷⁶ Subsequently Rossi feels 'the agony of having seized on an ideal and the danger of reducing it to action'.⁷⁷ However, after the suicide of his friend Bruno who was imprisoned and tortured following the demonstration against the bread tax, Rossi considers the just use of violent tactics to oust an authoritarian regime, and he later kills Bonelli in a fit of jealous rage. Like many other of his characters Caine ensures that Rossi atones, and he subsequently refuses a role in Italy's new Provisional Government. He admits responsibility for Bonelli's death and before disappearing into obscurity he explains his actions to his fellow deputies:

I have sinned, and I may stand on the frontier of the promised land, but I may not enter it. Such is the expiation demanded by the Almighty.⁷⁸

⁷³'A Message for the Times', Letter from Hall Caine to Arthur Spurgeon, dated 24 September 1901.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Eastern Daily Times*, 1 October 1901.

⁷⁶ *TEC*, p.217 (Part Four, XV).

⁷⁷ *TEC*, p.271 (Part Five, V).

⁷⁸ *TEC*, p.596 (Part Nine, XI).

Roman Catholic Doctrines in *The Eternal City*

Unlike many of his contemporaries who saw Roman Catholicism as invasive, sensuous and morally suspect, Caine was sympathetic towards the Catholic Church.⁷⁹ He told Rossetti that he sometimes attended a Catholic chapel close to where he lived, as well as an 'Anglican church of very pronounced ritual'.⁸⁰ Later in life, his relations with the Manx Catholic Church and the local Catholic population were friendly.

Historically the Roman Catholic population of the Isle of Man was small, numbering just 25 individuals in 1781; by 1900 it had risen to 2,030 in a total population of 54,752, augmented by immigrants from Ireland and Liverpool.⁸¹ Apart from some minor rivalry in the 1850s the Island did not experience the inter sectarian animosity which occurred elsewhere in the British Isles.^{82 83} As mentioned earlier, Dean Walsh, the prominent Catholic clergyman on the Isle of Man, offered advice to Caine on the monastic life during the writing of *The Christian*, and Caine spoke at the opening of two bazaars held to raise funds for Catholic schools on the Isle of Man.⁸⁴ Caine was also impressed by the contrast between Catholic and Nonconformist attitudes to drama and the theatre: 'From earliest times the Roman Church had recognised the power of the drama to teach, instruct and to amuse'; the morality plays were 'certainly intended as illustrations to the teachings of the pulpit'.⁸⁵

Conversations with Clerics

Even by his own high standards of preparation, Caine undertook very extensive research into Roman Catholic religious practice whilst preparing to write *The Eternal City*. He gained access to the Vatican through a member or members of the Papal household, and spent three winters in Rome between 1897 and 1900. In an article printed in the *Daily Mail* a 'friend of his, long resident in Rome' described Caine as:

⁷⁹ Patrick R. O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸⁰ Allen, p.83.

⁸¹ Arthur W. Moore, *A History of the Isle of Man*, Vol. II (1900; Reprinted by The Manx Museum and National Trust, 1977), pp. 680-1.

⁸² Harrison, pp. 361-3.

⁸³ Derek Winterbottom, *A Profile of the Isle of Man* (Ramsey, Isle of Man: Lily Publications, 2007), p.199.

⁸⁴ *Isle of Man Examiner*, 2 October 1901; *Manx Sun*, 23 August 1902.

⁸⁵ *Liverpool Echo*, 21 August 1902.

A frequent visitor in the Vatican, chiefly in the apartments of a distinguished prelate who was then the nearest attendant on the Pope, and is now a very eminent ecclesiastic at the head of a great diplomatic academy affiliated to the Vatican’⁸⁶

It is very probable that the ‘friend’ was, in fact, Caine himself, since it was not entirely out of character for him to self-publicise to increase interest in and sales of his novels. As will be expanded upon later, the leaking of a proposed visit to Russia on behalf of the London-based Russo-Jewish committee is a case in point.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, whoever the author, the *Daily Mail* article conveys the impression that Caine enjoyed a good relationship with members of the Papal hierarchy:

At the Vatican the order was issued to all whom it might concern that every door was to be opened to the English author, and that he was to be shown everything he desired to see.⁸⁸

Although he did not have, nor did he make any application for, a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, Caine sought permission to visit the Pope’s apartments. The request was made through an ‘American domestic prelate’ and the reply was ‘courteous’. The Vatican made no official recognition of the visit, but no objections were raised, and guided by one of the Pope’s private chamberlains Caine ‘visited the Pope’s home, stepping into one of his rooms as the Holy Father and his Cardinal Secretary of State passed into another’.⁸⁹ Speaking in 1901, Caine commented:

I have been privileged to see his Holiness a great many times, and have come close to those who have been very close to the Pontiff. His habits, his daily conversations, his casual remarks, and his deeper interests have not been altogether unknown to me during the past four years, coming through the medium of one or other members of his devoted household.⁹⁰

In view of the time Caine spent at the Vatican, it is not surprising that there are many similarities between the fictional Pius X and the recent, actual occupants of St Peter’s Chair, namely Pius IX (Figure 8) and Leo XIII (Figure 9). In the novel, the Pope is

⁸⁶ *Daily Mail*, 7 October 1901.

⁸⁷ Letter to Caine from Herman Adler, dated 7 October 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 58.

⁸⁸ *Daily Mail*, 7 October 1901.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Manx Sun*, 5 October 1901.

described as ‘a prisoner in the Vatican’,⁹¹ and in 1871 Pius IX had described himself in exactly these terms.⁹² The fictional Pius X believes that social reforms are the premise of the Church and forbids his ‘faithful children to participate in the affairs of a Government which exists by abrogation of his rights and spoliation of his treasure’.⁹³ Shortly after he took office in 1878, Leo XIII renewed the Church’s condemnation of Socialism and, in 1886, he banned Roman Catholics from voting in elections.⁹⁴ However, later in his papacy, Leo expressed concern for the working classes and in particular the unequal relationship between capital and labour, being described as ‘the workman’s Pope’ just like the fictional Pius X.⁹⁵ An 1891 encyclical addressed the mutual responsibilities of workers and employers, along with the rights of the former to some trade union representation.⁹⁶ Leo also used the phrase ‘Christian Democracy’ which he had previously condemned, although he confined its use to specifically that of defining beneficent Christian action for the poor.⁹⁷

The character of Pius X’s confessor is also derived from Caine’s observations of, and conversations with, Catholic clerics during his visits to the Vatican. Father Pifferi is a composite of Father Ventura, a popular orator who ‘sometimes spoke to the Holy Father [Pius IX] with extraordinary plainness’, and an unnamed friar, a religious scholar with easy access to the Vatican, who addressed Leo XIII ‘with equal candour’:

And it is whispered that when he visited the Vatican he sometimes administered to Leo XIII so severe an admonition that there was nothing left for the Pope’s valet but to put the Pope to bed.⁹⁸

In the novel, Father Pifferi acts as advisor to Pope Pius X and is often quick to express disapproval of the Pope’s views or actions. He disagrees with Pius’s decision to persuade Roma to inform on Rossi, and advises him to ‘leave the matter alone’.⁹⁹

⁹¹ *TEC*, p.12 (Part One, II).

⁹² Martin Collier, *Italian Reunification 1820-71* (London: Heinemann, 2003), p.116.

⁹³ *TEC*, p.186 (Part Four, VIII).

⁹⁴ Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes 1830- 1914* (1998; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.312.

⁹⁵ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 21 August 1901; *TEC*, p.10 (Part One, I); *TEC*, p.185 (Part Four, VIII).

⁹⁶ Chadwick, *History*, pp.314-15.

⁹⁷ Chadwick, *History*, p.321.

⁹⁸ Draft of Caine’s obituary for Leo XIII, Hall Caine Papers, Box 56.

⁹⁹ *TEC*, p.425, (Part Seven, V).

However, Caine tried to avoid courting controversy among Catholics. He claimed that the character of Pius X:

Was an imaginary person owing something no doubt to Pius IX and something to Leo XIII, but essentially the creation of the author's brain, treated, I trust reverently out of a regard for his position as the head of the greatest religious organisation in the world.¹⁰⁰

Caine was always careful to seek to maintain his good relations with the Catholic Church whilst simultaneously expressing criticism of certain of its teachings. Significantly, *The Eternal City* was not placed on the index of books forbidden to Catholics. Leo XIII requested that the book be read aloud to him.¹⁰¹ When asked if the novel would be censored, Caine thought it unlikely; 'The English counsellor to the *Index* is Father David, the Franciscan. I know a little of Father David and embodied some of his learning in my book'.¹⁰² However, he did not specify the nature of this 'learning'. Other reviews agreed with Caine's assessment:

It is at least certain that he [Pope Leo XIII] will find too much of his own mind in the works and thoughts of the imaginary Pope Pius X, as expressed in his Allocutions and letters, to condemn it in the lofty way of his less well informed followers. Nor do I think it likely that the book will be placed on the *Index Expurgatorius*.¹⁰³

Thus, Caine was generally perceived as possessing a sympathetic and open minded attitude to Catholics and Catholicism, and many Roman Catholic reactions to the novel were less critical than might have been expected. *The Freeman's Journal*, 'the most orthodox mouthpiece of Catholicism'¹⁰⁴ praised Caine's 'fair and impartial handling of the doctrines and dogmas which the Catholic Church holds so dear. He [Caine] has conscientiously aimed at truth'.¹⁰⁵ The *Catholic Times* was similarly

¹⁰⁰ *Manx Sun*, 5 October 1901.

¹⁰¹ Souvenir of Mr Hall Caine's New Novel, *The Eternal City*, issued by William Heinemann, August 1901, p.1.

¹⁰² *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁰³ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 28 August 1901.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1968), p.96.

¹⁰⁵ *The Freeman's Journal*, 23 November 1901.

impressed by Caine's desire 'to be scrupulously fair to the Church and to the Holy See':

Throughout the pages wherein the Pope is made to figure among the *dramatis personae*, there is always an undercurrent of deep and sympathetic interest in the destiny and power for good of the world-wide Church.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, the *Catholic Herald's* review was critical both of the novel itself, 'a puerile, long-winded, amateurish production', and of the views expressed in the *Catholic Times*, which had praised *The Eternal City* 'in no uncertain terms' and 'prophesied for it unbounded popularity'.¹⁰⁷ The *Herald* expressed surprise at the *Catholic Times's* claim that the novel showed 'befitting respect for the sacred doctrines of the Faith', remarking that 'we ventured to condemn it as unsuitable for Catholic reading'.¹⁰⁸

The support expressed by certain Catholic newspapers came at a price in the Protestant press. Some considered that Caine had been too sympathetic towards the Catholic Church, a view expressed by *The British Weekly*:

It will no doubt be felt by many readers of THE BRITISH WEEKLY [sic] that Mr Hall Caine shows throughout the book too great sympathy with the Roman Catholic Church, that while he criticises certain of its doctrines, he has not written a distinctly Protestant book.¹⁰⁹

Despite his Catholic sympathies, the criticisms of certain areas of Roman Catholic doctrines which Caine shows is summarised most succinctly by the Nonconformist periodical, *The Christian Age*:

The book is not avowedly an attack on Romanism, but three important items of belief; the infallibility of the Pope, the secrecy of the Confessional, and the right of the Pope to temporal power – are strongly called into question.¹¹⁰

Caine's treatment of the Catholic doctrines of papal temporal claims, and the closely linked papal infallibility, along with his handling of the seal of the

¹⁰⁶ *Catholic Times*, 30 August 1901.

¹⁰⁷ Review of *The Eternal City*, *Catholic Times*, 30 August 1901, quoted in the *Catholic Herald*, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ *The British Weekly*, 29 August 1901.

¹¹⁰ *The Christian Age*, 4 September 1901.

confessional, are considered below. Although Caine was hopeful that the Roman Catholic Church would one day be a powerful force working for the unity of Europe, these are the principal foci for a more critical eye, criticisms that, as I shall demonstrate, were very much at the forefront of debates about Catholicism at the turn of the century.

*'The Prisoner in the Vatican': Temporal Power and Papal Infallibility*¹¹¹

For centuries the Pope had been both a spiritual and a temporal ruler, governing the Papal States of central Italy. Following the 1849 revolution, the Vatican lost its lands and its temporal powers. Pius IX (1846-78), convinced that the loss would be accompanied by a decline in the Church's spiritual authority, was determined to defend Roman Catholic orthodoxy. He strongly rejected many nineteenth-century political ideologies such as communism, nationalism, and liberalism.¹¹² which he condemned in the 1864 Syllabus of Errors, 'a gauntlet thrown down by the Pope to the new social and political order in Italy'.¹¹³ In 1871 the Papal States were annexed to a united Italy with Rome as its capital. Pius IX never accepted the loss of the Vatican's temporality and became confined within the Vatican, just like his fictional counterpart Pius X in *The Eternal City*.¹¹⁴ The doctrine of Papal infallibility was promulgated at the Vatican Council of 1870 to further reassert Papal authority, which was also the motive behind the prohibition on Roman Catholic involvement in politics and the ban on voting.¹¹⁵

Papal encyclicals dealing with temporal power and the doctrine of infallibility fuelled the traditional hostilities which many British Protestants harboured towards Roman Catholicism. It was widely believed that the Catholic Church was 'conspiring to give itself greater power and influence by whatever means came to mind',¹¹⁶ and allegiance to the British state and the Crown was perceived as incompatible with loyalty to the Roman Church.

¹¹¹ *TEC*, p.12 (Part One, II); Collier, p.116.

¹¹² Collier, p.120

¹¹³ Collier, p.81.

¹¹⁴ Collier, p.83; *TEC*, p.12 (Part One, II);

¹¹⁵ Collier, p.141.

¹¹⁶ Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.11.

The issue of temporal power is raised in the opening chapters of the first section of *The Eternal City* which is entitled 'The Holy Roman Empire'. Various members of the aristocracy and the ruling classes gather at the Prime Minister's residence to watch the Pope's Jubilee procession. The reader is reminded that the Pope is 'a prisoner in the Vatican, going into it as a Cardinal and coming out of it as a corpse'.¹¹⁷ Like his fictional counterpart, Pius IX's imprisonment in the Vatican was, in fact, self-imposed. Under the 1871 Law of Guarantees, the Italian government awarded the Pope the rights of a sovereign within the Vatican City, and extra-territoriality to papal palaces within Rome. The Pope refused to leave the Vatican to avoid any appearance of accepting the authority of the Italian government over Rome and the former Papal states.¹¹⁸ Pius's description of himself as a prisoner was a politically motivated calculation aimed at engaging the sympathy of Catholics of all nationalities; as Owen Chadwick points out; '[i]t caused, for example, distant Irishmen to imagine the Pope chained to a wall by Italian shackles'.¹¹⁹ This is made explicit at the start of the novel when a group of American tourists, who have arrived to witness the Papal procession, hear the Pope described as a prisoner, and envision him in a cell wearing prison clothes.¹²⁰

As regards temporal power, Caine understood that:

The Pope feels deeply on the subject; and is sensitive to all opposition. A book which pictures a Pope abandoning the temporal claims of the Papacy cannot be agreeable to Leo XIII.¹²¹

In *The Eternal City*, Caine demonstrates from the outset that the Pope's temporal ambitions are a corrupting influence. Before his election to the papacy, Pius X was a man of the people, who, using his late father's fortune, 'turned his mind to the difficult task of reforming vice and ministering to the lowest aspects of misery in the slums of Rome', and gave away half his inheritance 'founding homes all over the

¹¹⁷ *TEC*, p.12 (Part One, II).

¹¹⁸ Chadwick, *History*, pp. 227-8.

¹¹⁹ Chadwick, *History*, p.227.

¹²⁰ *TEC*, pp.12-13 (Part One, II).

¹²¹ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

world for poor boys'.¹²² Society believed that 'he had turned Socialist', but after becoming Pope, Pius undergoes a change:

The priest of the future disappeared in a Pope who was the incarnation of the past. Authority was now his watchword [...] In Christ's name the Pope was sovereign – supreme sovereign over the bodies and souls of men – acknowledging no superior, holding the right to make and depose kings, and claiming to be supreme judge over the conscience of all – the peasant who tills the soil and the prince who sits on the throne!¹²³

His changed attitude is attributed to the corrupting influence of power. Rossi believes that absolute power:

Tends to make an unselfish man selfish, a modest man proud, a good man bad. The only atmosphere that surrounds a Pope, like the only atmosphere that surrounds a king, is an atmosphere of servility and flattery. It develops the evil, not the noble muscles of the soul. No man is better for being Pope, and the saintly man is worse.¹²⁴

Caine agreed with this – after the death of Leo XIII he commented that the only adverse accounts he had heard of the late Pontiff related to the exercise of absolute power 'which no man has a right to hold, and none can exercise without injury to the best part of his own nature, namely, that innermost part in which he is the brother and the equal of all men'.¹²⁵ Pius retains some sympathy for the working classes, many of whom revere him; a delegation of French workmen visits Rome to pay their respects to 'the Workman's Pope',¹²⁶ and David Rossi refers to him as a saint whose life has been a lesson in well-doing'.¹²⁷ However, his dreams of recovering temporal authority and his resulting confinement within the Vatican isolate him from the poor he once helped. Power fuels his temporal ambitions which include restoration of former Papal

¹²² *TEC*, p.14 (Part One, II).

¹²³ *TEC*, p.29 (Part One, V).

¹²⁴ *TEC*, p.189 (Part Four, VIII).

¹²⁵ *Household Words*, 30 July 1903.

¹²⁶ *TEC*, p.10 (Part One, I).

¹²⁷ *TEC*, p.64 (Part Two, III).

territories. Pius dreams of re-establishing the Holy Roman Empire and asserting the ‘divine rule of humanity from the chair of St. Peter’.¹²⁸

Like Rossi’s ‘Republic of Man’, the Church is under threat from proposed public order legislation giving the police the power to dissolve political parties and societies, including those connected with the Catholic Church. Although the Pope has forbidden ‘his faithful children’ to participate in the affairs of a Government which owes its existence to his loss of temporal power, Vatican officials are authorised to contravene this prohibition, pledging support for Rossi’s parliamentary faction if Rossi promises to uphold the Pope’s temporal claims. Pius X’s stated aim is to set up ‘[...] a great federative league of all the states of the world, each governed by its own laws and rulers but all subject to Rome as their metropolis [...]’ with the Pope as a temporal ruler.¹²⁹ Rossi views this ambition as another form of absolutism, no different from the authority exercised by the king or the military, and incompatible with democracy:

In temporal affairs, the theory of the Papacy rejects the theory of democracy. The theory of democracy rejects the theory of the Papacy. The one claims a divine right to rule in the person of the Pope because he is Pope. The other denies all divine right except that of the people to rule themselves.¹³⁰

Pius asserts his temporal power throughout much of the novel. For example, he refuses to receive the Italian king in his capacity as King of Rome because the city formed part of the pre-revolutionary Vatican territory, although he is willing to receive him as King of Sardinia or King of Italy.¹³¹ Pius addresses his cardinals in the following terms:

There are those who will not realise that the Pope, who by divine law, is placed above all human ordinances, cannot be the subject of any man, and that the

¹²⁸ *TEC*, p.29 (Part One, V).

¹²⁹ *TEC*, p.187 (Part Four, VIII).

¹³⁰ *TEC*, p.195 (Part Four, X).

¹³¹ *TEC*, p.452 (Part Seven, XII).

temporal sovereignty of the Roman Pontiff is necessary to the free exercise of his apostolic mission.¹³²

Although Pius acknowledges that Rossi's motives are laudable, he views the younger man as a dangerous revolutionary, and believes that the social reforms proposed in Rossi's charter can only be brought about by God Himself working through 'the authority of His Holy Church and Pontificate', not through people and organisations such as the Republic of Man.¹³³ However, as the plot develops, the Pope increasingly questions the desirability of temporal power. After reading the words of Gelasius 'a great Pope of the early Church' who believed the secular and spiritual spheres should be kept separate, Pius recognises that God wishes to save humanity with 'the humility of the cross', not 'the splendour of the diadem'.¹³⁴ Pius's anniversary Allocution suggests that he is considering abandoning his claims, but that he anticipates opposition from his cardinals.¹³⁵ In the closing chapters of the novel the government threatens to send soldiers into the Vatican to apprehend Rossi, who is sheltering there. The Cardinals consider resistance, but instead Pius goes out to greet the soldiers:

No longer shall it be said that the Pontiff is a king with a court and an army. No longer shall it be repeated that the temporal sovereignty of the Pope in one little city is necessary to the independence of a spiritual kingdom that is as wide as the world.¹³⁶

Caine demonstrates that the overriding preoccupation of the Pope and the Vatican hierarchy with the restoration of temporal powers distracts them from acting to improve the condition of the poor. Rossi comments on the Vatican's inaction regarding the new bread tax as follows:

¹³² *TEC*, p.414 (Part Seven, III).

¹³³ *TEC*, pp.480-81 (Part Seven, XIX).

¹³⁴ *TEC*, p.455 (Part Seven, XII).

¹³⁵ *TEC*, p.553 (Part Nine, I).

¹³⁶ *TEC*, p.587 (Part Nine, IX).

But in Italy as elsewhere, the people are starved [...] and when we appeal to the Pope to protest in the name of the Prince of Peace, he remembers his temporalities and passes on!¹³⁷

And yet, interestingly, the poor are shown as the most devout Catholics, supporting the institution of the papacy, which represents an unresolved tension within the novel - they flock to receive his blessing on the occasion of Pius's Jubilee.¹³⁸ Later, the 'deep and true devotion' of the poor pilgrims as they pray in St Peter's stands in direct contrast to the canons who chant their offices in 'weary and monotonous voices'.¹³⁹ Caine is clearly contrasting the lukewarm religiosity of the Church hierarchy with the sincerity of the ordinary laity.

Pius's insistence on his temporal claims allows Bonelli to manipulate him into encouraging Roma's denunciation of Rossi. Bonelli argues that if Pius's lack of cooperation leads to the King's assassination, both the public and the wider world might interpret the Pope's actions as actively conspiring towards the King's removal:

In the presence of a monstrous crime against the most innocent and the most highly placed, the world would say that what the Pope did not prevent, the Pope desired, what the Pope desired the Pope designed, and that the Vicar of the Prince of Peace attempted to rebuild his temporal power by means of the plots of conspirators and the daggers of assassins.¹⁴⁰

Pius later reflects on his actions and asks himself whether his conduct would have been the same 'if he had not been thinking of his perils and responsibilities as a prince?'. The tacit answer is 'no' – Pius concludes that he would have behaved differently if temporal issues did not have to be taken into consideration.¹⁴¹

As is evident from *The Eternal City*, Caine himself strongly opposed the concept of temporal power. He pointed to Pope Leo XIII, who considered restoration of Papal lands as vital for the exercise of his 'apostolic mission'. Caine believed that the logical outcome of this argument, given the size and geographical distribution of the Roman Catholic communion, was the extension of temporal power over the whole

¹³⁷ *TEC*, p.45 (Part One, VIII).

¹³⁸ *TEC*, p.10 (Part One, I).

¹³⁹ *TEC*, p.209 (Part Four, XIII).

¹⁴⁰ *TEC*, p.464 (Part Seven, XIV).

¹⁴¹ *TEC*, p.453 (Part Seven, XII).

world. In addition, the fundamental opposition between democracy and Papal power was the focus of his attention once again, in an article for the *Daily Mail* which Caine wrote in 1901. A Pope who was also a king must be an absolute ruler:

Such a thing as a constitutional Pope-King is an anomaly. It cannot exist. When Pope Leo XIII asks for the restoration of his temporal dominion he asks the people of Rome to return to a political condition in which they would have no powers themselves'.¹⁴²

Caine feared that spiritual, ecclesiastical and national affairs would fall under the control of one human being, credited with total power. The Pope was also responsible for the selection of his own College of Cardinals, which gave him a strong hand in deciding the direction the Church would take during his own lifetime, as well as strong influence as to which Cardinal might ultimately succeed him. Nor was the College representative of the world-wide membership of the Roman Catholic Church. In *The Eternal City*, Rossi points out that most of its sixty-four members are Italian, with only thirteen originating outside Italian territory.¹⁴³

A *British Weekly* leader, which also considered papal infallibility and the seal of the confessional, reflected these views:

The Pope in his spiritual character is an absolute Pontiff. That is the very essence of the idea of the Pope. He makes his own College of Cardinals and is therefore essentially a self-elected ruler. If you change such a spiritual sovereignty into a temporal one you establish an absolute temporal sovereignty such as the world has never witnessed outside the Chair of St Peter. The Czar of Russia is almost a constitutional monarch compared to the Pope of Rome.¹⁴⁴

Caine believed that through his demands for the return of his constitutional power Leo XIII was asking the people of Rome to sanction a return to a political condition in which they would have no democratic power, and 'putting back by five years the clock which marks the progress of the world'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁴³ *TEC*, p.431 (Part Seven, VI).

¹⁴⁴ *The British Weekly*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁴⁵ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

However, Caine was also hopeful that the Pope would abandon his temporal claims. He cited reports that Pius IX had been ‘on the verge of proposing terms’, also remarking that the strongest candidate for the papacy following the death of Pius IX had been heard to say that the Church had never had thirty such powerful and prosperous years as the period following its loss of temporal power.¹⁴⁶ This claim was repeated in the novel’s epilogue.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the loss of the Church’s temporal power led to greater influence in other areas. In 1891, when the Italian government excluded the Church from its traditional participation in various charities, Pope Leo actively encouraged Roman Catholic involvement in charitable schemes aimed at social reform, as a means of combating Socialism.¹⁴⁸ In the closing chapters of *The Eternal City* Caine himself demonstrates that the spiritual power of the Pope is greater than the temporal. Pius X, a frail old man, surrenders to the Government soldiers who are at the doors of the Vatican. He informs them that he is now a purely spiritual leader, having renounced all temporal claims, and that if they proceed further they will be entering God’s house, which is ‘covered with His wings and His protection’. The soldiers lay down their arms and depart.¹⁴⁹

Thus, Caine chose to involve himself in the contemporary debate concerning temporal power – he was clearly familiar with the arguments advanced on both sides and felt able to express personal and literary opinions based on a well-informed understanding of the issues at play.

Several commentators took issue with Caine’s optimism regarding the Pope’s relinquishment of his temporal dominion; ‘What can be said of a Pope who surrenders his temporal claims to the commander of the Royal troops on a mere unreasoning impulse?’¹⁵⁰ Nonconformists were especially sceptical. The Reverend J.H. Rush-Brookes, writing in *The Baptist Times and Freeman* decided that Caine’s hopes were ‘a snare and a delusion’, and concluded:

To us it is unthinkable that an organisation like that Church should ever render to human progress services as vast as Mr Hall Caine contemplates. It is bold

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *TEC*, p.604 (Epilogue).

¹⁴⁸ Collier, p.121.

¹⁴⁹ *TEC*, p.587 (Part Nine, X).

¹⁵⁰ *The Westminster Gazette*, 22 August 1901.

on his part to imagine the abandonment of the claim to temporal sovereignty on the part of a church which for a millennium and a half substituted a ruling priesthood for a Christian ministry; has ignored the principle of “He that will be chief among you, let him be the servant of all” and is tainted throughout by the traditions of paganism.¹⁵¹

A review in *The Methodist Times* also considered the issue of temporality. Caine himself identified Hugh Price Hughes as the likely author, although Hughes had been discouraged from working at that time due to illness.¹⁵² The review described *The Eternal City* as ‘an entrancing, delicious and most pathetic love story’ but also focused on the novel’s ‘deeper and more characteristic teaching’. Hughes concurred with the conclusions reached by Rush-Brookes on the likelihood of the Pope renouncing ‘the trappings of temporal sovereignty’ as ‘the delusions of a thousand years’.¹⁵³ Caine wrote that the review had ‘stirred and stimulated him’.¹⁵⁴

Naturally, most Roman Catholics were convinced that the Pope should not relinquish his claims. The *Catholic Herald’s* review dismissed Caine’s arguments against temporal power as ‘too complicated and long winded to answer here, were it worthwhile’.¹⁵⁵ Some lay Catholics also criticised Caine’s stance on temporal power, claiming that his desire to reform the Church in this way was ‘blasphemous presumption’:

If the Catholic Church was founded, established, and *is* still maintained by God, and its motive power the Holy Spirit, how can anyone but God reform his Church? [...] It is as certain as the sun in the heavens that if the Pope takes Hall Caine’s advice he would cease to exist as head of the Church on earth, and as an organisation, the Catholic Church would crumble and fade away.¹⁵⁶

The writer here however fails to understand Caine’s real point: that the Roman Catholic Church would remain fundamentally the same, as a truly international Church

¹⁵¹ *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 4 October 1901.

¹⁵² Letter to Caine from Price Hughes, dated 9 September 1901, cited in Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), pp.380-81.

¹⁵³ *The Methodist Times*, 22 August 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Letter to Caine from Price Hughes, dated 4 October 1901, cited in Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes*, pp.380-81.

¹⁵⁵ *Catholic Herald*, n.d.

¹⁵⁶ Undated letter from T. May, 40 Spondon Road, Tottenham, published in the *Catholic Times*, 13 September 1901.

with the potential to unite mankind. It was solely the temporal role of the Pope that would undergo modification.

The more liberal *Catholic Times* adopted a conciliatory attitude:

We are sure the claim to the Temporal Power of the Pope will not be yielded – since in no other way does it at present appear that his freedom of action will be preserved.¹⁵⁷

As stated at the beginning of this section, papal infallibility was closely linked to the question of temporal power. The doctrine was announced by Pius IX at the Vatican Council of 1870, to bolster Papal authority after territorial losses in 1849. Catholics who disagreed with Church teaching, the doctrine ran, were effectively questioning, or even denying, the authority of the Pontiff, and could be threatened with excommunication. The new doctrine was unpopular with liberal Catholics – Lord Acton, for example, had been 'inspired to sharp criticism of Rome' by unsuccessful attempts to save liberal Catholicism at the Council.¹⁵⁸ Although the exercise of infallibility was intended to be restricted to the Pope's formal *ex cathedra* pronouncements on matters of faith and morals many, both Catholic and Protestant, understood it to extend to his capacity as a temporal ruler as well. Gladstone, for example, in his 1874 pamphlet *The Vatican Decrees in their bearing on Civil Allegiance*, argued that Rome claimed universal monarchy in the Middle Ages and that the modern Vatican had not abandoned this claim, therefore loyalty to the British Crown could not be reconciled with obedience to the Pope.¹⁵⁹ Owen Chadwick points out that:

As early as 1859 a Jesuit writer claimed that infallibility in faith and morals must include infallibility in matters of public law. In 1906, another writer of the same school claimed that it was a great error to think that popes could judge faith and morals but were no better than anyone else in judging social action.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *Catholic Times*, 30 August 1901.

¹⁵⁸ Norman, p.92.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Wheeler, *Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth Century English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁶⁰ Chadwick, *History*, p.316.

Caine denied that his novel challenged the doctrine of infallibility; he said he was attacking the idea of *impeccability*, which was ‘quite a different thing’. He maintained that infallibility in matters of morals and doctrine was often mistakenly understood to mean that the Pope is unable to sin and by implication unable to make an error of judgment. Caine commented that; ‘[h]onestly the Catholic attitude to the Pope is repugnant to me, but it is not my Protestantism so much as my citizenship which rebels’.¹⁶¹ His views on the doctrine of infallibility are best summed up by Rossi’s comment within the novel; ‘There is only one infallible, impeccable and untamptable being. That is God, and to put a man in God’s place is idolatry’.¹⁶² A similar view was expressed by Hugh Price Hughes, who wrote that:

The real POPE, the infallible POPE is not [...] an Italian but JESUS of Nazareth, the Son of God. He has no vicar on earth because He is on earth Himself.¹⁶³

Caine admitted that he was unable to reconcile himself to the notion of papal infallibility, whether this was restricted to *ex cathedra* pronouncements on faith and morals or in the sense of papal impeccability on all social political and moral issues. In Caine’s view the Pontiff was ‘first of all a thing of flesh and blood’.¹⁶⁴ Therefore he deliberately sets out to stress Pius X’s humanity and vulnerability, a point which is constantly reinforced within the plot. Surrounded by the splendour of the Vatican, Pius lives frugally, with sparsely furnished rooms and simple food.¹⁶⁵ He has been in love and married, against the wishes of his wealthy father, and has also produced a child. After his wife’s suicide, Pius loses contact with his son - who is placed in an orphanage - and then he enters the priesthood, before embarking on an unsuccessful search for the lost boy.

Caine emphasises the personal stresses imposed on the Pope by the doctrine of infallibility. Pius is aware that he is ‘but clay’,¹⁶⁶ and his lengthy deliberations as to whether he should persuade Roma to denounce Rossi to the authorities demonstrate his humanity and vulnerability. During her meeting with the Pope, Roma notices his

¹⁶¹ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁶² *TEC*, p.188 (Part Four, VIII).

¹⁶³ *The Methodist Times*, 22 August 1901.

¹⁶⁴ *Household News*, 30 July 1903.

¹⁶⁵ *TEC*, p.417 (Part Seven, IV).

¹⁶⁶ *TEC*, p.495 (Part Seven, XXII).

‘troubled old face’ when he discovers that Rossi may be involved in a plot against the King’s life and she recognises ‘the awful responsibility of a human being who wears the tiara’.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Pius himself speaks of ‘the awful burden which the new dogma of infallibility has added to the old sovereignty of the Pope’ in his Allocution to the Cardinals.¹⁶⁸

The British Weekly leader had claimed that infallibility was ‘the logical expression of one of the root principles of the Catholic Church. ‘It is the very essence of authority’ and that ‘no Pope can hold a temporal sovereignty without bringing the infallibility he claims in morals to bear on his rule’.¹⁶⁹ Caine had been concerned that a conflation of this doctrine with retention of temporal power would produce a form of absolutism in which the Pope’s pronouncements not only on issues of religion and morals but also on political, social and governmental matters were deemed infallible.¹⁷⁰

In the novel, issues regarding infallibility (and impeccability) ultimately remain unresolved. Pius’s decision to renounce his temporal power is accompanied by increased awareness of his human frailty but in the novel’s conclusion, Caine gives no overt indication as to whether the Pope himself also decided that his doctrine of infallibility was flawed. However, he suggests that it would certainly not be viable or credible in the rapidly modernising world described in the novel’s epilogue, in which, significantly, the divine right of kings, along with war, wealth and private land ownership have ‘disappeared’.¹⁷¹

Although Caine was often critical of the Papacy as an institution, he remained sufficiently open minded to recognise the positive attributes in individual incumbents of the office. In *The Eternal City*, Caine makes this distinction between the man and his office by describing the splendour of the Vatican, ‘less like the home of a priest than the abode of a king’, before he draws the reader through the outer, magnificent, apartments into the Pope’s private, plainly furnished, rooms where he is ‘surrounded by the little domesticities of intimate life’.¹⁷² After the death of Leo XIII in July 1903,

¹⁶⁷ *TEC*, p.422 (Part Seven, IV).

¹⁶⁸ *TEC*, p.553 (Part Nine, I).

¹⁶⁹ *The British Weekly*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁷⁰ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁷¹ *TEC*, p.604 (Epilogue).

¹⁷² *TEC*, pp.407, 417 (Part Seven, I, IV).

Caine produced a warm tribute to the late Pontiff, describing him as ‘a great statesman and a great Pope’, and praising his great Christian charity which, in Caine’s words, never allowed him to say one word ‘which denied salvation to every human being of whatever communion who kneels at the foot of the cross’.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, even here Caine retained his aversion to Papal absolutism, claiming that the only instances of hurtful or antagonistic behaviour by Leo XIII were rooted ‘in the absolutism which his position imposed on him’, and concluded that; ‘The system which makes a man feel that he is above all other men, and a direct channel of the Holy Ghost, may well be a daily and an hourly strain on his humanity’. Caine described his ‘passionate conviction, as a democrat and a non-Catholic that absolute power by whomsoever exercised, is an absolute evil.’¹⁷⁴

The Seal of the Confessional

The confidentiality of confession, or the seal of the confessional, is also examined in some depth in *The Eternal City*. Auricular confession had never completely died out in the Anglican Church, being authorised by the Book of Common Prayer, but it was rarely practiced until the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷⁵ Pusey revived the practice in 1838, and from the 1850s onwards it was offered to worshippers by Ritualist clergy.¹⁷⁶ The practice was viewed with distrust and deep suspicion by the majority Anglican British public and many Church of England clergy as ‘a Romanizing novelty’ and as an intrusion into Victorian family life. According to Bishop Wilberforce, it superseded ‘God’s appointment of intimacy between husband and wife, father and children’.¹⁷⁷ Charles Reade’s *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), for example, opens with an angry husband, who, jealous of his wife Katherine’s close relationship with her confessor, attempts to eject the priest from the marital home. Katherine refuses to allow this, resulting in Griffith’s departure, following which he contracts a secret, bigamous marriage.¹⁷⁸ As Margaret Maison comments; ‘John Bull did not take kindly to the idea of confession,

¹⁷³ Draft of an article entitled ‘Pope Leo XIII’, published in *Household Words*, 30 July 1903, Hall Caine Papers, Box 33.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Gerald Parsons, ‘Reform, Revival and Realignment: The Experience of Victorian Anglicanism’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. I, Traditions*, ed. by Gerald Parsons (1988; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.14-66 (p.52).

¹⁷⁶ Bentley, p.30.

¹⁷⁷ Bentley. p.31.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Reade, *Griffith Gaunt* (1866; London & Glasgow: Collins Clear Type Press, n.d.).

regarding it as a form of sneaking and fraught with terrible dangers for the British female'.¹⁷⁹

Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the growing practice of auricular confession in the Anglican Church, whilst still relatively small, gave similar cause for concern. In 1877, the private publication of a High Anglican handbook for confessors, *The Priest in Absolution*, resulted in widespread public protests. Disraeli's Home Secretary R.A. Cross classified it as 'obscene literature' and called for the author's prosecution.¹⁸⁰ Suspicion and prejudice towards confession was still found in popular literature as late as the turn of the twentieth century. The author and former Methodist minister Joseph Hocking expresses anti-Catholic sentiment through his depiction of confession in several of his novels. In *The Scarlet Woman* a nun confides in her fellow sisters, revealing dissatisfaction with convent life and a longing for her former fiancé. She is reminded that in doing so she is committing a sin which she must confess the next day. Hocking observes that 'One of the impulses of the soul is to confess' [i.e., in the sense of confiding in another person], 'whereby the human heart can be eased of its burden'.¹⁸¹ However, as Hocking says:

The Roman Catholic Church has turned this innate desire into a mighty instrument, whereby it holds in its grasp many millions of people.¹⁸²

Portrayal of the confessional also contributed to sensational storylines; again, in *The Scarlet Woman* the hero, falls in love at first sight with a reluctant nun, and after many adventures, including physical assaults and the virtual imprisonment of the nun by a 'wicked Jesuit', she is rescued by the hero, who poses as her confessor to gain access to the convent.

It was the notion of female confession which gave the most cause for anxiety, due to concerns about potentially 'emotional' women indulging in self-display and fears that the relationship between priest and confessant which gave the priest access to domestic 'secrets' might undermine the authority of the husband as head of the

¹⁷⁹ Maison, p.80.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), p.193.

¹⁸¹ Joseph Hocking, *The Scarlet Woman* (1899; New York and Melbourne: Ward Lock & Co. Limited, n.d.), p.113 (Chapter IX).

¹⁸² Ibid.

household.¹⁸³ There were other reasons. In 1874 the Reverend C.F. Lowder suggested that women attended confession more frequently than men because they had always shown more religious devotion.¹⁸⁴ Robert Lee Wolff describes the experience of the novelist and Catholic convert, Lady Georgina Fuller, who after reading a fictional account of confession in Grace Kennedy's 1823 novel *Father Clement*, decided that she would herself like to make a confession.¹⁸⁵

Susan Griffin suggests that women, especially those who were isolated or lonely, sought not only an admission of sin, but 'a recounting of self, a demand for authoritative recognition and response' – in such a situation a confessor represented a reliable figure of authority.¹⁸⁶ She cites the example of Charlotte Brontë. During her stay in Brussels, Brontë experienced depression and loneliness, and 'took a fancy' to attend confession at the cathedral of Saint Gudule.¹⁸⁷ This experience, of course, famously found fictional expression in *Villette*, when Lucy Snowe, on the verge of a breakdown, seeks to make a confession. Since Lucy is a Protestant the priest cannot give absolution. Instead he acts as a confidante and counsellor as Lucy tells of her intense depression and isolation.¹⁸⁸

Roma's confession in *The Eternal City* is similarly motivated, with this episode clearly demonstrating that Caine is entering the debate specifically about female confession. Following Rossi's flight from Italy, Roma is alone, anxious and uncertain regarding the future of their relationship. Roma has denied that she was Baron Bonelli's mistress; however, she has also omitted to tell Rossi that Bonelli had in fact seduced her. Therefore, after her marriage to Rossi, Roma is overcome by anxiety regarding his reaction when he finally discovers the truth. She ponders the benefits of confession, seeking validation of her decision not to tell Rossi of the seduction, and she thinks of her dying aunt who gained some comfort, albeit temporary, through absolution.¹⁸⁹ Here Caine clearly suggests that confession can be a source of spiritual comfort. Roma observes her aunt's response immediately after she has confessed:

¹⁸³ Griffin, pp.165-66.

¹⁸⁴ Bentley, p.35.

¹⁸⁵ Wolff, p.73.

¹⁸⁶ Griffin, p.153.

¹⁸⁷ Griffin, p.152.

¹⁸⁸ Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (1853; London: Virago Press, 1990), p.155 (Chapter 15).

¹⁸⁹ *TEC*, p.362 (Part Six, X).

After confession she thought she was forgiven. She imagined she was pure, sinless, soulful. Perhaps she was so, and only the pains of death made her seem to fall away. But what a power in confession! Oh, the joy of her poor face when she had lifted the burden of her sins and secrets off her soul! Forgiveness! What a thing it must be to feel oneself forgiven! [...]¹⁹⁰

Although not baptised a Catholic, Roma persuades a priest to listen to her story, and her reaction after she has unburdened herself illustrates clearly that Caine recognised the efficacy of confession:

When [she] got up from the grating of the confessional she felt like one who had passed through a great sickness and was now better. Her whole being was going through a miraculous convalescence. A great weight had been lifted off; she was renewed as with a new soul and her very body felt light as air.¹⁹¹

The priest is Father Pifferi, who is also the Pope's confessor. He decides to consult Pius X as to whether Roma should inform her husband of her past. Roma is summoned to an interview with the Pope during which she inadvertently, and mistakenly, reveals that Rossi and his followers may be plotting an attempt on the King's life. The novel then moves on to consider the critical question of whether a priest should break the seal of the confessional to prevent a crime or denounce a guilty individual. However, the Pope has assured her that 'What you said in simple confidence shall be as sacred as if you had spoken under the seal of the confessional'.¹⁹² Father Pifferi advises against informing the authorities and argues that Roma's confidence should be respected. However, after a period of reflection, the Pope decides that Roma has imparted the knowledge of an imminent crime and made him a potential accomplice to regicide.

In an interview with Caine which was published in the *Daily Mail*, he was questioned on the subject of confession in his novel. Caine stated his belief that the Pope's decision to reveal details of Roma's confession would only cause offence to those Catholics 'who knew imperfectly the teachings of their Church'. An 'everyday confessor', presumably a parish priest, would be aware that the seal of the confessional

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ *TEC*, p.368 (Part Six, XI).

¹⁹² *TEC*, p.422 (Part Seven, IV).

was inviolable and would have been left in no doubt of the position by the guidance contained in his theological text books.¹⁹³ He continued, to point out that cases such as Roma's were extremely rare and the confessor should seek more senior advice in such circumstances.

Caine asserted that the seal of the confessional affected the confessor, not the penitent, and stated that he had shown 'that where necessary to avert a great public calamity the confessor not only can, but must, call on his penitent to reveal dangerous facts to the proper authorities'.¹⁹⁴ If the penitent is unwilling or unable to do this, then the confessor 'must do the thing himself' exercising discretion to ensure that the penitent is not identified. Caine claimed that this was the teaching of leading theologians, without which '[...] the confessional would be an unchristian institution which in its regard for the sanctity of an individual soul could forget its duty to God and become the silent accomplice of crime'.¹⁹⁵ Even though he frequently expressed the view that spiritual authority should trump political and worldly authority in *The Eternal City*, here he presents a situation where the reverse is the case, but crucially goes on to suggest that if spiritual authority was correctly understood, it would seamlessly harmonise with both the political and worldly.

The aftermath of Roma's confession also reinforces Caine's view on the impossibility of papal infallibility. A central plot point in the novel is that Pius is shown to waver and deliberate as to whether he should keep his promise to Roma, or reveal the content of her confession. When it is proved beyond doubt that Rossi did not intend to assassinate the King, he is forced to admit that he was mistaken in encouraging Roma to denounce Rossi to the authorities, when he was in fact an innocent man, and Pius 'thinks of his own share in the awful error which had shattered the young man's life'.¹⁹⁶

The British Weekly's leader suggested that Caine had not attacked the confessional as an institution, but had demonstrated that 'in a certain instance the accepted view of the 'seal of confessional' was not justified'. Caine had taken the

¹⁹³ *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *TEC*, p.568 (Part Nine, V).

position that the Pope ‘not only can, but must reveal as much as is necessary to prevent bloodshed’:

If the confessional preserved the sanctity of the individual at the cost of the general welfare, then it is an institution which forgets, in its duty to the individual, its higher duty to God.¹⁹⁷

However, according to the *Catholic Herald*, this statement ignored the fact that a penitent would feel able to confess precisely because the seal of the confessional could be relied upon to preserve his or her confidence:

Had Catholics the slightest reason to believe that the seal was binding only as long as the confessor considered it advisable, confession would cease to exist.¹⁹⁸

The *Catholic Freeman’s Journal* praised Caine’s portrayal of confession in the novel:

A splendid tribute is paid to the efficacy of auricular confession in the heroine Roma, who although not a child of the Church is impelled to seek consolation in confession.¹⁹⁹

As I have shown, Caine examined three seminal areas of Roman Catholic doctrine which at the time of his writing were particularly igniting controversy. The views he expressed were often critical, suggesting that whilst he was broadly sympathetic to the Catholic Church, praising the work of its priests and nuns among the poor, in matters of doctrinal detail he was hostile to certain aspects of its teaching. Whilst acknowledging the efficacy of confession, he could not accept either temporal power or infallibility – the former distracted the Church from its spiritual mission whilst the latter separated the occupant of Saint Peter’s chair from the rest of mankind. However, what is striking here is how complex some of his positions were, and how potentially radical. Caine was exceptional in his measured and reasoned criticisms revealing a depth of religious knowledge belying the general perception of him as a creator of sensational melodramas, and providing a marked contrast with stereotypical images of Roman Catholicism in the novels of his contemporaries.

¹⁹⁷ *The British Weekly*, 29 August 1901.

¹⁹⁸ *Catholic Herald*, n.d.

¹⁹⁹ *The Freeman’s Journal*, 23 November 1901.

Caine, Corelli and Catholicism – *The Eternal City* and *The Master Christian*

By 1900, a thriving sub-genre of ‘pulp’ Protestant fiction existed. These stridently anti-Catholic novels were aimed at a mass market, with sensational plots featuring wicked Jesuits, reluctant nuns, and strong criticism of Catholic doctrine and the Papacy.²⁰⁰ *The Eternal City*, with its even-handed, well researched, and thorough critical treatment of Catholic doctrines, and its detailed exposition of Caine’s personal religious and political views cannot be grouped with such novels. To demonstrate this I have chosen to compare *The Eternal City* with *The Master Christian* by Marie Corelli, which although it considers similar issues, highlights by contrast Caine’s nuanced and sensitive treatment of some of the contemporary controversies around Roman Catholicism.²⁰¹

The “best-seller” status of both Caine and Corelli, along with the melodramatic storylines favoured by them, meant that their names were often linked by reviewers and critics. *The Free Lance* claimed that the term ‘melodrama’ was often applied as a term of abuse to novels which ‘dared’ to be interesting; the novels of Caine and Corelli were thus categorised.²⁰² The two were also reputed to be rivals. Corelli herself admitted that she had conceived ‘a very natural antipathy to Mr Hall Caine’ and ‘avoided reading any of his books on principle’, after Caine, who worked as a reviewer for George Bentley in the late 1880s, was effectively responsible for the rejection of her first novel *A Romance of Two Worlds*:

He [Caine] was then reader to Mr George Bentley, and in that capacity did his level best to secure the rejection of my work by the firm. I was informed of this by a letter (still in my possession) from the late George Bentley.²⁰³

Corelli’s novel, *The Master Christian*, was published in September 1900, eleven months before *The Eternal City* appeared in book form, and contemporary reviewers were quick to spot common ground between the two novels. Obviously, the title echoes Caine’s earlier novel, *The Christian*, but despite Corelli’s denial this was

²⁰⁰ Bethany Kilcrease, ‘Radical Anti-Catholic Protestantism and When It Was Dark: The Novel and its Historical Context’ in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, Vol.57, No.2, 2014, 210-230, (p.212).

²⁰¹ Marie Corelli, *The Master Christian* (London: Methuen & Co., 1902).

²⁰² *The Free Lance*, 7 September 1901.

²⁰³ *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1901.

in all likelihood a deliberate act.²⁰⁴ Vivien Allen quotes the comment of Caine's publisher, William Heinemann, who suggested that the choice of this title was an attempt to profit by 'the success of Caine's similarly named book'.²⁰⁵ Corelli may also have been demonstrating to readers that that her creation was a 'better' Christian than the very flawed John Storm. However, closer scrutiny of the content of *The Eternal City* and *The Master Christian* illustrates two very different views of the Catholic Church.

Serialisation of Caine's novel began in the *Ladies Magazine* shortly after *The Master Christian* was published, and within weeks the perceived similarities between the novels provoked speculation that somehow Corelli had 'anticipated' Caine's novel.²⁰⁶ Corelli denied this, and in a letter widely published in national and provincial newspapers, she claimed that:

[...] to anticipate Hall Caine's subject for his proposed novel would indeed be a prodigious literary effort, and one quite beyond me altogether, as I have no acquaintance with the eminent author, and cannot even hazard a guess at the secrets of his brain cells.²⁰⁷

Her letter itself proved controversial, particularly since it included slighting remarks regarding Caine's personal appearance, namely a 'self-stated personal resemblance to Shakespeare'.²⁰⁸ The *Daily Express* described it as an 'outrageous attack upon Mr Hall Caine, offending all the canons of good taste'.²⁰⁹ However, Caine remained unusually 'laconic', refusing to engage in any literary dispute.²¹⁰ Doubtless this literary 'feud' did little to harm sales of either book, as the following comment from *The Referee* indicates:

If I did not believe that Mr Hall Caine despised the arts of advertisement, and that Miss Marie Corelli regarded publicity with just such an 'antipathy' as she

²⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵ Allen, p.258.

²⁰⁶ *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1900.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1900.

²⁰⁹ *Daily Express*, 11 September 1900.

²¹⁰ *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1900.

expresses for Mr Hall Caine, I confess that I should think that far from being divided, they were working for a common end.²¹¹

Many chapters of *The Master Christian* are set in Rome against a background of civil unrest over taxes,²¹² which is also the case in *The Eternal City*. The novel considers those Catholic doctrines examined by Caine - temporal power and papal infallibility, and examines the shortcomings of contemporary Christianity with regard to the Roman Catholic Church. There are two Christian Socialist characters who seek to apply their values to government. A further similarity to *The Eternal City* is the sensational plot; in this case there are two deaths in a single duel, a murder after which the victim is restored to life, and a miraculous cure.

The main plot centres around Christ's return to earth. In a sense, Corelli is returning to the success of her *Sorrows of Satan* (1895), in which Satan is forced to roam the earth as long as there are human beings who succumb to his temptations. In *The Master Christian*, Manuel, a young waif, who is in fact an incarnation of Christ himself, is taken in by the saintly Cardinal Bonpré, whose Christian charity is viewed with suspicion by the Church hierarchy. It is suggested that the child is Bonpré's illegitimate son. Manuel himself heals a crippled boy; the Cardinal is credited with the cure, but the sceptical Vatican authorities suspect that Bonpré harbours Papal ambitions, and has practiced some trickery, bringing about a 'miracle' to achieve his goal. One of Caine's favourite themes, the failure of the Church to live up to Christ's teaching, is expressed through Manuel. On entering a church building, the boy comments on the materialism and hypocrisy of the Church Christ founded in what is a familiar Caine-ian cry; 'How sad it is that people should come into those buildings looking for Christ and never finding him'.²¹³ Manuel questions the Vatican's retention of vast wealth with 'millions and millions of poor, starving, struggling, dying creatures, near at hand, cursing the God whom they have never been taught to know or to bless'.²¹⁴

Two characters in *The Master Christian*, Aubrey Leigh and Cyrillon Vergniaud, are described as Christian Socialists. Leigh, who comes from a wealthy

²¹¹ Comment from *The Referee* (undated), quoted in the *Manx Sun*, 15 September 1900.

²¹² *The Master Christian*, p.221(XV).

²¹³ *TMC*, p.176 (XII).

²¹⁴ *TMC*, p.438 (XXVIII).

family, is ‘a terrible socialist and reformer’ and he causes a sensation in England with his ‘Addresses to the People’ denouncing the materialism and hypocrisy of much organised religion.²¹⁵ Leigh is especially critical of the Catholic Church; ‘The great princes of the Church care nothing for the poor – the very Pope allows half Italy to starve while he shuts himself up with his treasures in the Vatican’.²¹⁶ Vergniaud is the illegitimate son of a Catholic priest (the Abbé) who abandons his lover and their son for a successful career in the Church, and he becomes a prolific author of socialist literature; ‘the writer of fierce political polemics and powerful essays that were the life and soul, meat and drink of all members of the Christian Democratic party’.²¹⁷ However, Corelli never examines the political beliefs of either character, but simply confirms their intense aversion to Roman Catholicism. In *The Eternal City*, Caine provides Rossi with a structured policy for national government along Christian principles, however vaguely expressed and impractical this may have been; Corelli simply informs the reader that Vergniaud would bring about a ‘silent and bloodless French Revolution’²¹⁸ and that Aubrey Leigh would create a new religious movement, establishing ‘Centres’ for worship in major cities, without clergy or elaborate furnishings, where the working classes would gather for informal Christian services.²¹⁹

Leigh’s hostility to the Catholic Church takes precedence over his Socialism. When he visits Rome, he does not question the Vatican’s failure to use its wealth to relieve poverty. Instead, the ‘chief part of his business’ is to discover ‘the view taken by the Papacy of the Ritualist movement in England’,²²⁰ and to express his determination that ‘the hand of Roman priestcraft shall never weigh on England while there are any honest men left in it’.²²¹

Turning specifically to the issues of papal infallibility and temporality in *The Master Christian*, the Abbé Vergniaud’s remarks seem similar to comments in Caine’s novel regarding the Pope’s imprisonment in the Vatican:

²¹⁵ *TMC*, p.127 (VIII).

²¹⁶ *TMC*, p.77 (V).

²¹⁷ *TMC*, p.222 (XV).

²¹⁸ *TMC*, p.525 (XXXIII).

²¹⁹ *TMC*, p.599 (XXXVII).

²²⁰ *TMC*, p.287 (XVIII).

²²¹ *TMC*, p.312 (XX).

The Pope is a prisoner by his own choice! If he elected to walk abroad among the people and scatter Peter's Pence among the sick and needy, he would then perhaps be *beginning* to do the duties our Lord enjoined on all his disciples.²²²

Manuel pleads with the Pope to leave the Vatican and witness for himself the poverty outside his restricted environment, telling him:

You want no kingdom [...] you want no temporal power! Enough for you to work and live as the poorest of all Christ's ministers – without pomp, without ostentation or public ceremonial, but simply clothed in pure holiness.²²³

However, the Pope is unable and unwilling to do so - his temporal claims set him at odds with the Italian government which controls Rome, and he is confined to the Vatican until he renounces these claims or the government yields to his demands. Unlike Caine, Corelli could not imagine that the Pope would settle for spiritual authority alone; in Caine's novel Pius's decision to abandon his temporal claims allows the Catholic Church to thrive. In the epilogue to *The Eternal City*, a Roman Catholic priest remarks that:

The Church has never known fifty such peaceful and prosperous years as since it went back to the Gospel which forbade all formal interference of religion in worldly affairs.²²⁴

The fact that Caine ascribes these words to a priest indicates his confidence that the Catholic Church's future was assured when the Pope became a purely spiritual ruler, although this comes about after a ten-year European war.

Corelli also takes a different stance to Caine in that she is extremely critical of the Papacy itself. The Christ-child Manuel describes it as 'an office constituted by man, long after Christ', founded upon 'the name and memory of the Apostle Peter, who publicly denied all knowledge of his Master'.²²⁵ The doctrine of papal infallibility means that 'The force of Rome is impregnable! – the interpretation of the Gospel by the Pope infallible'.²²⁶ The Vatican is a worldly organisation; cardinals oppose the

²²² TMC, p.221 (XV).

²²³ TMC, p.439 (XXVIII).

²²⁴ TEC, p.604 (Epilogue).

²²⁵ TMC, p.423 (XXVII).

²²⁶ TMC, p.314 (XXI).

marriage of a wealthy Catholic heiress to a freethinking English socialist, fearing that the union will deprive the Church of her fortune.²²⁷

The novel's unnamed Pontiff embodies the intransigence of the Roman Catholic Church in the face of pressure for change. Any physical description of the Pope belies his supposed infallibility by using images of decay and mortality; he is a 'figure of clay',²²⁸ 'a shrunken white mummy set in a golden sarcophagus'.²²⁹ This is a far cry from Caine's Pope, a vulnerable old man and flawed human being, a widowed father often uncertain as to what course of action he should take, and who himself needs the advice of his confessor.

There are two Jesuit characters in *The Master Christian*, Monsignors Gherardi and Moretti. The former has a beautiful mistress, several children, and is 'the most unscrupulous of men, to whom religion was nothing more than a means of making money and gaining power'.²³⁰ He is determined to bring about the reconversion of England to Catholicism, and describes English Protestantism as 'nothing more than a backsliding from the true faith', with the Ritualism of many Anglican clergy indicating a desire to return to the 'Original Source of the Divine Inspiration'.²³¹

Moretti conforms even more closely to the stereotypical Jesuit; a 'black clad, sinister, sacerdotal enemy who never walks but always glides'.²³² Like other villainous Jesuits, such as Father Scaviatoli in *Father Eustace*, whose long dark eyelashes conceal his eyes,²³³ Monsignor Moretti walks with partially lowered eyelids, carefully listening to every word spoken by those around him.²³⁴ He believes that adherence to Christianity as preached by Christ is not feasible; 'in its primitive simplicity it is an impossible creed'.²³⁵

A Jesuit also features in *The Eternal City*; an unnamed Cardinal who promises Papal support for Rossi's 'Republic of Man' party in Parliament if Rossi backs the return of the Pope's temporal powers. Rossi rejects the offer. However, the Cardinal

²²⁷ *TMC*, p.325 (XXI).

²²⁸ *TMC*, p.433 (XXVIII).

²²⁹ *TMC*, p.437 (XXVIII).

²³⁰ *TMC*, p.300 (XX).

²³¹ *TMC*, p.536 (XXXIV).

²³² Wolff, p.31.

²³³ Griffin, p.82.

²³⁴ *TMC*, p.221 (XV).

²³⁵ *TMC*, p.414 (XXVII).

is a more sympathetic character than Corelli's Jesuits. He accepts Rossi's refusal to cooperate with the Vatican, and is moved when Rossi speaks of a new, reformed and stronger Church in which the Pope will abandon his temporalities to help the poor.²³⁶

Although reference to the confession is not directly made within the narrative of *The Master Christian*, it is included in an appendix, entitled 'Relics of Paganism in Christianity as approved by English Bishops'. Corelli draws attention to the Bishop of Bristol's instructions to the Vicar of All Saints, Clifton, to invite his parishioners 'most cordially' to attend confession as 'it will be such a help to them'. She also pointed out that the Bishop of Chichester ignored the fact that at St. Bartholomew's, Brighton, 'seven hundred confessions were heard before Christmas 1898, and that ten thousand were heard in that parish last year [1899]'.²³⁷ Corelli appears to have included this appendix for no other reason than to reinforce anti-Catholic prejudice. In this case, her view of confession as a 'Relic of Paganism' provides a further contrast with Caine, who had researched issues relating to the seal of confession, and was sufficiently perceptive to recognise its spiritual and emotional benefits to the penitent. However, he was also aware of potential pitfalls when the sin confessed involved wider political and social issues, and his conclusions represented something of a considered compromise, with the confessor informing the appropriate authorities of any impending crime whilst simultaneously attempting to preserve the anonymity of the penitent.

Like Caine, Corelli professed the desire for a broad inclusive non-sectarianism: '[t]he true Christian faith has no dogma – no form – no sect [...] there are no 'isms' in this faith',²³⁸ and she claimed to extend tolerance to all religions, 'Jews or Baptists, Papists or Buddhists' provided their adherents did 'unostentatious good'.²³⁹ However, unlike Caine, her tolerance did not extend very far in novelistic practice and certainly excluded the Roman Catholic faith. She remarked that: 'There is no creed in the world which is better adapted for those who are morally weak and frightened of themselves', and that the Roman Catholic priesthood was the 'lineal descendant' of the ancient Egyptian priesthood; 'Both deserve the utmost respect for their immense capacity as

²³⁶ *TEC*, p.90 (Part Four, VIII).

²³⁷ *TMC*, pp.633-34 (Appendix).

²³⁸ Marie Corelli, *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1905), p.47.

²³⁹ *Free Opinions*, p.56.

rulers of the ignorant.²⁴⁰ Her later novel, pregnantly entitled *Temporal Power* (1902), exhibits similar anti-Catholic sentiment. The plot centres around the king of an unnamed nation who is sympathetic to Socialism, much to the disapproval of the Church. The Jesuits plot to assassinate the king and lay the blame on a leading Socialist – fortunately for the king, their plans are frustrated.²⁴¹

The Master Christian was perceived as a ‘violent attack on Roman Catholicism which provoked the usual outcry’.²⁴² Caine’s friend, Dean Walsh complained of Corelli’s ‘venomous bitterness’ towards the Catholic Church,²⁴³ whilst the Catholic *Freeman’s Journal* compared the two novels to Corelli’s disadvantage:

Of all the latter day works of fiction which deal with the Catholic Church, and the thesis of *The Eternal City* is mainly concerned with that Church, Hall Caine stands out as pre-eminently first – like Saul among the prophets he towers above [...] His treatment is dispassionate, generous, and conscientious. He does not indulge in the wild fight of imaginative abandonment so conspicuously displayed in the ‘Master Christian’ with its twelfth century Christianity [...]²⁴⁴

Unsurprisingly, *The Master Christian*, was placed on the Index of forbidden books unlike *The Eternal City*:

The Italian press has a good deal to say [...] about Marie Corelli’s novel *The Master Christian*. And what they say is that no author ever displayed greater ignorance of the Vatican and the Eternal City. The Vatican journals themselves observe a discreet silence on the subject, but the cardinals who compose the ‘Congregation of the Index’ have decided to put the book in the Index, so that it is now a sin for a Roman Catholic to read it.²⁴⁵

Both *The Eternal City* and *The Master Christian* also formed the subject of several contemporary sermons, again demonstrating the popularity of best-selling novels with a strong moral or religious content as subjects within church services. The

²⁴⁰ *Free Opinions*, p.52.

²⁴¹ Marie Corelli, *Temporal Power* (London: Methuen & Co. 1902).

²⁴² *Masters*, p.165.

²⁴³ *The Bookman*, 17 September 1901.

²⁴⁴ *The Freeman’s Journal*, 23 November 1901.

²⁴⁵ *Daily Mail*, 24 September 1900.

former met with a generally positive reaction. The *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that the Baptist minister Charles Aked, of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, preached ‘to an overflowing congregation’ on *The Eternal City*. He claimed it was a ‘great joy’ to discuss ‘a book so mighty and splendid’. Aked described Rossi’s policies and asked which was right – the Christianity of the Churches or the Christianity of Christ? He ended the sermon by stating that ‘universalism and brotherhood were in God’s mind’ for humanity’.²⁴⁶ In Hastings, the Reverend Gardner Preston described Rossi as ‘a man who wished to see the Lord’s Prayer applied to every department of government’ and continued:

They ought not to let men go into Parliament or county or borough councils for their own gain, but with a desire to do the will of God. If this was done in Hastings, the town might be made as beautiful from a social point of view as it was from a natural point of view.²⁴⁷

The Master Christian elicited much more mixed responses. Andrew Douglas, a Presbyterian minister preaching in Arbroath, praised Corelli as a ‘veritable prophetess of the Lord’, remarking that the novel displayed ‘flashes and intuitions of religious truths expressed with splendid grace and true sincerity’.²⁴⁸ Surprisingly, several Nonconformist ministers criticised the novel on literary and religious grounds. Preaching in Oxford, the Reverend Samuel Chadwick of the Leeds Mission commented on *The Master Christian*’s ‘sloppy’ style, and he complained of the book’s ‘vindictive’ tone and the fact that the author seemed to have ‘no faith in either priests or man’.²⁴⁹ In Morpeth, A.T. Guttery, a Primitive Methodist minister, claimed that the book was not a novel but ‘a long-winded sermon of 600 pages’. Although ‘great in its imagination’ it contained ‘great mistakes’, being filled with ‘blemishes and blotches’, ‘lurid sensationalism’ and ‘vituperative’ portrayals of Roman Catholic clergy.²⁵⁰ The fact that *Nonconformist* clergymen criticised Corelli’s attitude towards Catholic clergy suggests that her anti-Catholicism was so bitter that it even had the power to shock those who might not be expected to feel any sympathy towards the Roman Church.

²⁴⁶ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 1 October 1901.

²⁴⁷ *The Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 30 November 1901.

²⁴⁸ *Arbroath Herald*, 28 February 1901.

²⁴⁹ *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 29 October 1900.

²⁵⁰ *Morpeth Herald*, 1 December 1901.

Corelli herself denied that *The Master Christian* was anti-Catholic, claiming that she did not ‘attack any one form of Church more than another’. She said that her aim in writing the novel had been to ‘point out the simplicity and duty of Christ’s own teaching, as set forth in the New Testament’, which the Churches had ‘lost sight of’.²⁵¹ Thus, her aim was much the same as Caine’s –but her literary method was very different. Indeed, the fact remains that Corelli seemed almost constitutionally unable to portray any positive aspects of Catholic dogma or practice, or to countenance any possibility of positive change within the Catholic Church. On the evidence of *The Master Christian*, her professed tolerance for all faiths was nothing but empty rhetoric. Caine’s all-inclusive version of non-sectarian Christianity may leave him open to suggestions that he lacked deep convictions, but there can be no doubt that he was prepared to engage in detail with topical religious questions, and in a spirit of negotiation and compromise, in a way that a writer like Corelli was not. In Caine’s fiction, we find a determination to do justice to the key questions facing Christianity within popular fiction - notable by its absence in a writer with whom he was frequently compared.

Conclusion

The Eternal City represents a fuller exploration of issues considered in *The Christian*; namely the extent to which Christianity has fallen short of Christ’s teaching and the role Christian ethics ought to play in the government of nations, not just in the lives of individuals. Caine introduced a Christian Socialist hero in Rossi, but he does not fully address the practicalities of Rossi’s scheme of government according to the Lord’s Prayer; however, some individuals, such as Hugh Price Hughes believed that they could become a blueprint for Christian government. Caine adopted an even-handed approach toward controversial Catholic doctrines such as papal infallibility, temporal claims and confession. In the case of the former, he could clearly express what he regarded as the failings of these doctrines without greatly offending Catholics. As regards his attitude towards confession; although he chose an untypical and ambiguous example, he recognised the spiritual benefits, whilst remaining aware of issues when the sin confessed broke the law or threatened the life of an individual or public safety.

²⁵¹ *Hull Daily Mail*, 5 December 1900.

In the novel's epilogue, Caine looks forward to the establishment of a European Federation which includes Britain, with the Pope as its spiritual guide. The Catholic Church has truly Christian and universal appeal due to its abandonment of material concerns for a purely spiritual mission. In writing the novel, Caine's hopes for international peace and cooperation – a Brotherhood of Mankind - together with his Christian Socialist sympathies, led him to look beyond the gulf between Catholic and Protestant which gave rise to the perception of Catholicism as a threat to the Church of England and monarchy. Instead of such narrow national and sectarian concerns he could express his vision of a united Europe governed on Christian principles under the guidance of the Pope as head of a significantly reformed Roman Catholic church. Moreover, Caine's desire to overcome national and religious boundaries led him to move beyond the dream of a united Christendom to considerations of the potential for unity between the three great monotheistic religions. This will be examined in the chapters which follow.

Chapter Four

Judaism - Moving Beyond a 'Half-Union of God's People'¹

Portraying Jews and the Jewish Identity in Literature

The portrayal of the Jew and Jewishness in literature was another area of religion which greatly interested Caine. In May 1892, he lectured on the subject to the Maccabeans, a recently formed Jewish society, the membership of which, according to Meri-Jane Rochelson, comprised 'a circle of professionals and intellectuals'.² Caine spoke at length about the Jew both as the creator and the subject of literature. In relation to the former, he seemingly considered the Jewish texts to be the spiritual ancestor of modern fiction:

The Old Testament writings as we have got them, contain some of the most perfect stories in the literature of the world. Separated from its spiritual and historical significance, regarded merely as a literary entity, purely as a group of characters, I do not know of anything to compare in beauty, pathos, picturesqueness, tragic power and sublimity with (may I use the word without offence) the novel, which tells of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, beginning with the selling of Joseph by his brethren and ending with the crossing of the Red Sea by the Children of Israel under Moses'.³

Caine went on to comment on what he called the 'extraordinary eclipse' of the Hebrew literary genius, 'choked by the odium of medieval malevolence'. Under the pressure of persecution, Jewish creative powers 'had no force to spend on literature where the hourly necessities were those of flesh and blood'.⁴ However, Caine believed that having survived 'the barbarism of medieval oppression', the Jewish literary genius was finally, in the later nineteenth century, re-emerging after a long period of

¹ *The Christian World*, 29 December 1892.

² Meri-Jane Rochelson, 'Zionism, Territorialism, Race, and Nation in the Thought and Politics of Israel Zangwill', in *"The Jew" in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa*, ed. by Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 144-60 (p.144).

³ Transcript of Caine's speech to the Maccabeans, *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, pp. 482-84 (p.482).

⁴ *Ibid.*

dormancy - with Jews now found in almost every walk of literary activity, ranging from literature to journalism. They included figures such as B. L. Farjeon and Israel Zangwill, along with the many, 'chiefly anonymous' journalists at work in London and other European capitals.⁵ Farjeon was a prolific novelist, dramatist and journalist, but perhaps more important to Caine was his fellow novelist Zangwill, with whom he was to strike up a close friendship, and who was active in the Zionist movement in which Caine was to become involved.

Caine characterised the Jews as 'heroic people, great in prosperity, strong in adversity'. However, their literary image was that of 'a sort of cuckoo race, building no nest of its own – an excrescent nation, that trails through the countries with the stigma of the heretic and leper combined', of which Shakespeare's Shylock was the epitome; his name conjuring up a 'metaphor for cunning and duplicity'.⁶ However, Caine excused Shakespeare, since he earned a living by:

The favour of his populace, and that in the moral atmosphere of the people of his day (as seen in Marlowe's 'Jew of Malta' and elsewhere), the Jews were an accursed race, the enemies of mankind and the especial foes of Christianity.⁷

Caine refused to accept that Shakespeare was guilty of anti-Semitism, and stressed his evident sympathy for his creation. Caine believed that after Shakespeare's Shylock no writer 'had really felt the Jewish character strongly'. There was no important portrayal of a Jew in Fielding, Richardson, or Smollett, while Sheridan's comedies had merely depicted 'usurious Jews' and indebted Christians. The first effort 'on a high level' was, in his view, Isaac of York in Scott's *Ivanhoe*, followed by 'a small group of noble Jewish studies' including those of Disraeli and George Eliot. Caine wished that 'Eliot's later genius had vitalised *Daniel Deronda* as her earlier genius had vitalised *Adam Bede*'.⁸

⁵ *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, p.482.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, p.482.

⁸ *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, p.483.

Caine concluded that studies of the heroic Jewish character in English literature had been ‘astonishingly few’ and that ‘only sketches of grotesque Jews [had] been numerous and popular’, of which Dicken’s Fagin was typical. In considering Fagin, Caine was also reminded of another ‘very real monstrosity’ – the Jew of the modern stage, with his ‘shabby hat and his long sack coat and his nasal snuffle and his mincing walk’, characterised by ‘cunning and cowardice, often tintured with the greenest stupidity’. Caine recognised the accepted convention that ‘Jews have perhaps always been objects of ridicule upon the stage’ and speculated on the reasons for its persistence. He thought it may be that writers copied stereotypes, knowing of no better examples, and perhaps that the Jews themselves, fearing and resenting the novelists and dramatists who had ridiculed them, had shut themselves up, concealing their noble qualities.⁹

Significantly, although his talk was entitled ‘The Jew in Literature’, Caine moves well beyond that topic to deal with some of the political realities surrounding Judaism. Caine expresses deep empathy with the Russian and Polish Jews fleeing persecution to settle in Britain, but also urges that they attempt some measure of assimilation into British society. He argues that Jews, once they emerged from the confines of the Ghetto, were ‘notoriously assimilative and clubbable’, and he saw no reason why a heroic type of Jew should not be accepted by the English reading and play-going public. Thus, Caine had decided ‘at all hazards to make an experiment at trying a heroic Jew on the English public’ and he had done so, not on the stage, but in a novel’, producing ‘results which surpass my expectations’.¹⁰

The Scapegoat: Caine’s Jewish Novel

So, Caine embarked on producing that novel - *The Scapegoat*,¹¹ published in 1891, the year before the Maccabean society talk, and which relates the story of Israel ben Oriel, the son of a Moroccan Jewish father and an English mother. Israel has an unhappy

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, p.483.

¹¹ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Scapegoat* (London: William Heinemann, 1891).

childhood, the result of his father taking a second wife. Domestic discord follows and Israel accompanies his mother to live with her brothers in England, but the pair are unwelcome. Israel later returns to Morocco to minister to his dying father, and is cheated out of his inheritance by the Moroccan authorities. Left penniless, he has little choice other than to earn a living by working as the tax collector for the Basha of Tetuan, Ben Aboo, who owes allegiance to Abd-er-Rahman, the Sultan of Fez. Israel is ostracised by his fellow-Moroccan Jews, as they believe that '[h]e has sold himself to our enemy against the welfare of our nation',¹² and he is disregarded in the synagogue where, 'in taking the votes of their people, they [Israel's co-religionists] passed him by'.¹³ Israel marries the daughter of a Rabbi, but his bride shares his alienation from the rest of the Jewish community. Initially, Israel rejects the Basha's demands for increasingly punitive taxation of rich and poor alike, saying that there 'is no evil but injustice' and 'Do justice, and you do all that God can ask or man can expect'.¹⁴

However, when his long-awaited daughter, Naomi, is born blind, deaf and dumb, Israel becomes an object of contempt to both Muslim and Jew: 'God had declared against him; [. . .] why should man show him mercy?'¹⁵ Israel becomes increasingly embittered: 'It was not God but the devil that ruled the world. It was not justice but evil that governed it'.¹⁶ He discards any notions of justice, and redoubles his efforts to extort taxes from even the poorest of the Sultan's subjects, with arbitrary imprisonment for those unable to pay. Some years after his wife's death, in a scene reminiscent of an Old Testament narrative, Israel has a vision in which God addresses him and reveals that his daughter's condition is a divine punishment for his serving a corrupt master; she is a 'sin offering', or a scapegoat, for Israel's misdeeds.¹⁷ Israel is told that he too is a scapegoat, blamed by both Muslims and Jews for the excessive

¹² *TS*, p.7 (Chapter I).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *TS*, p.28 (Chapter III).

¹⁵ *TS*, p.25 (Chapter III)

¹⁶ *TS*, p.55 (Chapter V).

¹⁷ *TS*, p.91 (Chapter VIII).

taxation of Ben Aboo the Basha and his wife Katrina.¹⁸ Subsequently, Israel resolves to alter his way of life, regardless of the cost, as he prays for an improvement in Naomi's condition:

O! Let him lose anything, everything, all that the world and all that the devil had given him; but let the curse be lifted from his helpless child! For what was gold without gladness, and what was plenty without peace?¹⁹

This vision also requires Israel to consult a 'new holy man', the Mahdi, Mohammed of Mequinez, who instructs him to: 'Exact no more than is just, do violence to no man; accuse none falsely; part with your riches and give to the poor'.²⁰ Israel follows the Mahdi's advice and makes restitution to those unjustly taxed from his own pocket, but finds that he receives no thanks. Ben Aboo is angered by Israel's actions, and the poor regard him with contempt, assuming his actions follow the Basha's command to make repayment.

Finally, Israel decides to leave the Basha's service, hoping that Naomi will make a complete recovery, and he sells his possessions to purchase food for a group of individuals unjustly jailed by the authorities. Naomi does indeed regain her ability to see hear and speak – whether by supernatural or natural means is unclear - but, shortly after her recovery is complete, the Basha imprisons Israel. Naomi sets out to bring her father food and comfort during his imprisonment, but she falls into the hands of the Basha, who promises to release Israel in return for her conversion to Islam. Naomi's conversion will allow the Basha to ingratiate himself with the Sultan by offering her as a Muslim bride for the Sultan's harem. However, Naomi is accused of apostasy after experiencing misgivings regarding her new faith, and is herself imprisoned. Deliverance arrives in the form of the Spanish invasion of Tetuan. Although the Sultan escapes, the Basha is stoned to death by an angry mob and, in the ensuing chaos, the Mahdi brings about Naomi's escape and reunites her with Israel.

¹⁸ TS, p.93 (Chapter VIII).

¹⁹ TS, p.107 (Chapter IX).

²⁰ TS, p.111 (Chapter X).

The novel ends with Israel in complete empathy with his fellow human beings. He is vindicated, as Jews and Muslims alike recognise that he was not innately evil, but was the tool of a corrupt regime. By this time Israel is a dying man, but he dies content in the knowledge that Naomi will enjoy a happy and secure future with the Mahdi who has fallen in love with her. They marry and remain in Morocco, living an exemplary life of good work and charity among the poor.

Naomi's recovery was considered implausible by many reviewers. The *Pall Mall Gazette* questioned the credibility of the blind Naomi climbing a hill unaccompanied, and playing 'strange harmonies' on a harp whilst still blind, deaf and dumb. The article also notes her first words, a plea for 'Mercy, Mercy!' that her father's life shall be spared by the Jews plotting his death and it asks: 'Is it probable, even possible, that an abstract term should be the first to rise to her lips?'²¹

Although Caine was ambivalent about Naomi's miraculous recovery and whether this was due to natural or supernatural causes, each improvement in her condition follows some act of renunciation and atonement by Israel, suggesting divine approval of his actions and setting Naomi's successive 'cures' in the context of biblical miracles. However, Caine also provides a slippery, but somewhat convoluted, rational explanation for each event which preserves the possibility of supernatural intervention without making it a necessity. Naomi regains her hearing after suffering a brain fever which causes the discharge of the 'watery humour' which was blocking her ears.²² She gains the power of speech in an emotional reaction after her father is sentenced to death by Tetuan's Jewish community.²³ Her sight is restored when the shock of hearing her father abused by the Basha's wife causes cataracts to fall from her eyes:

What had happened to her, was, after all, a simple thing. Born with cataract on the pupils of her eyes, the emotion of the moment at the Kasbah, when her

²¹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 October 1891.

²² *TS*, p.136 (Chapter XII).

²³ *TS*, pp.198-99 (Chapter XV).

father's life seemed to be once more in danger; had – like a fall or a blow – luxated the lens and left the pupils clear.²⁴

Thus, whilst Caine provides a rational explanation for Naomi's recovery there remains an underlying and stronger suggestion that divine intervention has played a part. Israel's prayer for help is followed by recognition of his own sin which instigates atonement – his faith in God fuels his conviction that if he pursues a path of moral reform, all will eventually be well.

The structure of the novel itself is simple and linear with the absence of Caine's more melodramatic plotting being noted by some. *The Observer* remarked:

Its [*The Scapegoat's*] place among Mr. Hall Caine's previously published works will not easily be determined. The entire absence of that crudity of design in expression which has characterised more than one of his novels is a distinguishing feature in *The Scapegoat*; and it is probable that among his works now published it will take a leading place.²⁵

The Christian Union praised this departure from Caine's earlier, colourful, romances:

The elevated plane on which Mr Hall Caine has written this book [...] shows that he is taking a more serious interest in the social problems of humanity than his former work, excellent as it was from the literary point of view, would indicate.²⁶

Some considered that the novel as the equal of, or even superior to, *The Deemster* and *The Bondman*. *The Scotsman* commented that: '[t]he new story which Mr Hall Caine has now written will rank with his two previous productions. Nay, it will, in some respects, rank above them', because it 'is always poetic, always striking, never bathetical'.²⁷ As we have seen, in fact *The Scapegoat* did not quite represent the enormous step-change perceived by the press. Caine had always been interested in

²⁴ TS, p.261 (Chapter XX).

²⁵ *The Observer*, 11 October 1891.

²⁶ *The Christian Union*, 25 October 1891.

²⁷ *The Scotsman*, 28 September 1891.

religious questions, even in his most aggressively populist work. However, in the case of *The Scapegoat*, the change of literary form from melodrama to a simple, linear narrative, along with his portrayal of a Jewish character, deliberately focused attention on the religious content within the novel. Indeed, the religio-political context is uppermost in this novel, and therefore it can less easily be dismissed as novelistic window-dressing, underpinning a more colourful plot and characterisation.

Caine also employs language specifically designed to mimic King James Bible prose throughout *The Scapegoat*. In Israel's dream, he addresses the Lord in words taken from the book of Samuel; 'Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth'.²⁸ Similar language is used elsewhere: Israel is described as 'recking nothing'²⁹ and as 'stricken in years'.³⁰ Several reviews commented on this style of writing - *The Times of Morocco* remarked on its 'curious old time flavour'.³¹ Another review praised the 'sustained eloquence' of the narrative which was reminiscent of 'the Psalms of David', arguing that the novel 'might take its place by the side of the Hebrew histories in the Apocrypha; for it is as nobly and as manfully written',³² pre-empting Caine's own bringing together of Jewish text and modern fiction in his 1892 lecture. However, other reviewers were critical of this style and thought the connection a false one. 'Nothing is so hard to achieve or keep up as a real imitation of biblical language', said *The Manchester Guardian*, 'the kind of language appropriate perhaps to a translation of a saga, but not to a modern tale'.³³

Caine selected Morocco, with its sizeable Jewish community, as the location for *The Scapegoat*. It was Caine's second novel with a foreign setting; parts of *The Bondman* (1890) had been located in Iceland. Whilst writing the novel, Caine sought advice from several informed individuals, including the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire, the Reverend Hermann Adler, who

²⁸ TS, p.93 (Chapter VIII).

²⁹ TS, p.148 (Chapter XIII).

³⁰ TS, p.271 (Chapter XX).

³¹ *The Times of Morocco*, 10 October 1891.

³² *The Scotsman*, 28 September 1891.

³³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 October 1891.

provided information regarding the lives of the Sephardic Jews of Morocco, and Israel Abrahams of the *Jewish Quarterly*, who gave Caine specific guidance on Jewish ceremonial law. In Morocco itself, Ion Perdicardis of Tangier and J. E. Budgett Meakin, former editor of *The Times of Morocco*, were, according to Caine, sources of ‘important help with all that concerned the local atmosphere of the story’.³⁴ Caine also thanked T.E. Brown, the Manx poet, for his ‘unacknowledged collaboration at various points’.³⁵ However, the exact nature and extent of this collaboration is unclear. Brown certainly read the proofs for the novel in June 1891.³⁶ He also advised against dramatizing *The Scapegoat*, due to the difficulty of finding a suitable actress to play Naomi:

[...] the actress would have to be simply phenomenal. Perhaps the great Sarah [Bernhardt] could have done it some 20 years ago. But as it is, the part is beyond the compass of any extant actress.³⁷

Caine evidently acted on this advice, as Brown was a much loved and respected friend. In the event the novel was never dramatized, one of the few Caine novels not to receive this treatment.³⁸

In March 1890, a month before the serialisation in the *Illustrated London News* began, Caine travelled to Morocco ‘on a visit for local colour’.³⁹ He was clearly carrying out research and writing at the same time. After sailing from Liverpool to Gibraltar, Caine went by ferry to Tangier, where he stayed at the French Hotel.⁴⁰ However, Caine needed to visit the Kasbah and the ‘native quarter’ for the purposes of his research, where he wandered alone (much to the consternation of the British Consul).⁴¹ He found a guide and undertook an expedition into the desert which ensured

³⁴ Prefatory note to the 1891 edition of *The Scapegoat*, Vol. I (London: William Heinemann, 1891).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Letter to Caine from T.E. Brown, dated 17 June 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 45.

³⁷ Letter to Caine from T.E. Brown, dated 25 September 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 45.

³⁸ Allen, p.211.

³⁹ Allen, p.209.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Allen, p.209.

that the required 'colour' was achieved.⁴² Whilst providing a reasonably full account of this visit, Vivian Allen does not mention his meeting with the Shereef of Wazan, ruler of the province in the north of the country, where *The Scapegoat* was located.⁴³ Caine formed a 'poor opinion' of the Moroccan government and of the internal state of the country; he describes the Shereef, a descendant of the Prophet, as a shabby individual with a 'soiled djellab'. The Shereef informed Caine that his third son had been imprisoned by the eldest after trying to bastinado (cane the feet of) a European while drunk. Caine deduced from the Shereef's sickly appearance that he had not long to live, and concluded 'he will not be regretted [. . .] the odour of his name is not sweet in Morocco'.⁴⁴ Eight years after *The Scapegoat* was published, Caine described 'writing the story, fresh from scenes of unparalleled iniquity', his heart 'afire for the sufferings of humanity in a barbarous country that lay so near to the doors of civilisation'.⁴⁵

Morocco, a predominantly Islamic country, was at that time ruled by a series of mainly corrupt Shereefian sultans who were reputedly descendants of the Prophet himself. The small Jewish population was subject to harassment and some persecution. Jewish agents handled the bulk of trans-Saharan commerce in some Moroccan towns and their prosperity aroused the hostility of the majority Muslim population.⁴⁶ The novel was set 'in the last years of the Sultan Abd er Rahman';⁴⁷ the Spanish invasion of Tetuan which takes place at the close of the novel dates the setting more precisely to 1859, but corruption and tyranny remained endemic and hostility towards the Jewish population persisted throughout the rest of the century. Budgett Meakin, who had provided such valuable assistance during Caine's research, described the novel as giving 'a remarkably faithful picture of the conditions of life in Morocco, and

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Undated interview from an unnamed periodical, Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I (1887-95), p.48.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Preface to the American edition of *The Scapegoat* (New York: D. Appleton and Company Publishers, 1899), vi.

⁴⁶ A.E. Atmore, 'Africa on the Eve of Partition', in *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume 6 from 1870 to 1905*, ed. by Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.10-92 (pp. 20-21).

⁴⁷ Preface to *The Scapegoat*, 1892 edition, xiii.

especially of the Jew',⁴⁸ whilst the *Jewish Chronicle* claimed that Caine had written with knowledge and sympathy:

He has obtained a rare grasp of Jewish custom, and has succeeded in giving a truthful and very realistic sketch of the manners of Moroccan Jews.⁴⁹

Caine describes the restrictions placed upon those Moroccan Jews, who were confined within the *Mellah*, a gated enclosure. Each day at sunset, they 'trooped back to their own little quarter, so that their Moorish masters might lock them into it for the night'.⁵⁰ Caine shows them as having had no right to offer evidence in a Muslim civil court,⁵¹ being forbidden to wear slippers,⁵² not allowed to ride a horse or donkey,⁵³ or hold titles of respect such as Sidi (Lord),⁵⁴ and subject to verbal abuse from the Muslim population, with insults such as 'Jew! Dog! There is no God but God (sic)! Curses on your relations!' being common.⁵⁵ When the Sultan visits Tetuan to mark the Prophet's birthday, the Jewish community emerges from its *Mellah* to welcome him with the rest of his subjects. However, their demonstration of loyalty is unappreciated by the Moorish population:

Thus they [the Jews] were scolded and abused on every side, kicked, cuffed, jostled, and wedged together well-nigh to suffocation. Their banners were torn out of their hands, their tambourines were broken, their voices were drowned, and finally they were driven back into their *Mellah* and shut up there, and forbidden to look upon the entry of the Sultan even from their roofs.⁵⁶

By setting the novel in Morocco, and depicting the hardships experienced by Moroccan Jews, some argued that Caine allowed his readers to indulge in indignation

⁴⁸ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 9 March 1892.

⁴⁹ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 September 1891.

⁵⁰ *TS*, p.42 (Chapter IV).

⁵¹ *TS*, p.4 (Chapter I).

⁵² *TS*, p.7 (Chapter I).

⁵³ *TS*, p.101 (Chapter IX).

⁵⁴ *TS*, p.100 (Chapter IX).

⁵⁵ *TS*, p.7 (Chapter I).

⁵⁶ *TS*, p.322 (Chapter XXIV).

at anti-Semitism in other parts of the world without acknowledging that life was far from perfect for Jews in Britain. Edgar Rosenberg names Caine as one of ‘a dozen largely forgotten novelists’ writing in the 1890s who chose to ignore the Jew’s ‘present humiliations’ by ‘dealing with the Jew entirely in the context of an idealised past’ and producing ‘historical romances featuring Jewish characters’.⁵⁷

Certainly there is little doubt that Caine idealises life for Jews in ‘free, mighty, noble, beautiful England’, where Israel lives as a boy and a young man.⁵⁸ He dreams of returning there with Naomi, and fondly describes it is a place full of ‘white hearted men’, where ‘a Jewish man may find rest for the sole of his feet’.⁵⁹ In *Nina Balatka* (1869), Anthony Trollope presents a similarly optimistic view of life in England for Jews,⁶⁰ but there is no evidence of any association between the two authors – Caine would have been 29 when Trollope died in 1882, and his literary career had only just begun in earnest. Indeed, Caine does not mention having read any of Trollope’s work. One of the novel’s central characters, Anton Trendellsohn, who is in love with the eponymous Christian heroine, dreams of leaving Prague for England where Jews were not immured in their own quarters, but could ‘live among Christians as one man should live with his fellow men – on equal terms, giving and taking’.⁶¹

It seems that it was left to Zangwill to directly address the challenges facing Jews living in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but Caine’s relationship with Zangwill suggests that the ‘present humiliations’ to which Rosenberg refers were never far from Caine’s mind when writing *The Scapegoat*. These ranged from poverty, overcrowding and practical difficulties regarding strict observance of Jewish religious practice, along with questions regarding the extent to which Jews should assimilate into the dominant Christian culture. In *Children of the*

⁵⁷ Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960) p.294.

⁵⁸ *TS*, p.308 (Chapter XIII).

⁵⁹ *TS*, p.224 (Chapter XVII).

⁶⁰ Anthony Trollope, *Nina Balatka* (1869; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶¹ *NB*, p.69 (Chapter VI).

Ghetto, the pious Moses Ansell exists on a diet of black tea and dry bread to comply with Jewish dietary laws whilst working as a travelling pedlar.⁶²

Moreover, although it is set in the 1850s, the harsh restrictions on Jewish life in Morocco remained an issue of concern which still persisted in the 1890s. The *New York Herald* commented that Jews in Europe welcomed *The Scapegoat* 'as an effort to show the world the bondage to which their race is subjected in the north of Africa'.⁶³ The *Illustrated London News* shared this view, remarking that:

The ill-treatment of the Jews in the barbarous Mohammedan state of Morocco has for many years been notorious to all the world; as it will be remembered that the venerable Sir Moses Montefiore, who visited that country expressly to inquire concerning the oppression of his co-religionists, pleaded frequently with our own and foreign governments to use their influence in order to obtain redress.⁶⁴

Caine would have been aware that, despite the resurgence in anti-Semitic feeling in Britain fuelled by the influx of Eastern European Jews, in relative terms, British Jews did indeed fare better than their East European and North African co-religionists. David Englander points out that Anglo-Jewry was never the object of discriminatory legislation, which required distinctive clothing or confinement within a specified area. The disabilities they suffered arose because they were not Anglicans, *not* because they were Jews, and emancipation proceeded throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁵

In *The Scapegoat*, Caine successfully raised the profile of anti-Semitism, not only in Morocco, but also in relation to Eastern European Jews - in the context of Caine's attitude to Judaism and his relationship with the Jewish community in Britain

⁶² Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto* (1892; Marston Gate: Amazon Reprint, n.d.), p.55 (Book I, Chapter V).

⁶³ *New York Herald*, 15 November 1891.

⁶⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1891.

⁶⁵ David Englander, 'Anglicized not Anglican: Jews and Judaism in Victorian Britain', in *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. I, Traditions*, ed. by Gerald Parsons (1988; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.235-73 (p.239).

and further afield, the characterization of *The Scapegoat* as avoiding contemporary questions about Judaism seems, to say the least, misconceived.

Israel ben Oliel - Seeking a 'Heroic Jew'?

Initially, the plot of *The Scapegoat* did not centre around a Jewish hero. An article by the journalist and critic Raymond Blathwayt in the evangelical periodical *Great Thoughts* closely examined the novel's genesis, which he traced from an idea of Caine's some four years prior to completion and publication.⁶⁶ Blathwayt reported that he gained some insight into the 'root idea' from 'casual conversation' with Caine himself, and this 'idea' involved a beautiful blind, deaf and dumb girl whose soul was locked into its 'blind tabernacle of flesh'. She was to be accompanied by a man of supernatural powers, 'a type of wandering Jew', who alone possessed the power to communicate with her.⁶⁷ Rosenberg has traced the development of the trope of the Wandering Jew to the legend of Ahasureus, a Jew present at Christ's crucifixion who was punished by a life of rootless immortality after joining in the clamour for the release of Barabbas.⁶⁸ By the 1890s this character had been translated from a religious being 'of whom Christ made an example for the edification of sinners' to a secular figure possessing supernatural or mesmeric powers of which the best-known example is George Du Maurier's Svengali, a character in his 1895 novel *Trilby*.⁶⁹ Blathwayt recalled the strong hold the figure of the wandering Jew exercised on Caine's imagination, and Caine himself stated that he had discussed his ideas with Wilkie Collins, who also revealed to him that Dickens had contemplated a very similar notion towards the end of his life (Dickens himself had been inspired by the vivid impression made upon him by the young American girl, Laura Bridgeman, who had been born blind, deaf and dumb.)⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Raymond Blathwayt, 'How Mr Hall Caine's Book "The Scapegoat" Came to be Written', *Great Thoughts*, 28 November 1891, pp.352-53 (p.352).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rosenberg, pp.190-205.

⁶⁹ Rosenberg, p.207.

⁷⁰ Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 28 November 1891, p.353.

After completing *The Bondman*, Caine returned to his idea of such a character by way of Mary Magdalen. He saw gaps in the narrative prior to Mary's encounter with Jesus which could be filled imaginatively with little offence to any readers who might normally object to such fictional supplementation of the Bible story.⁷¹ Caine was particularly interested in exploring the meaning of the Scriptural description of Mary being possessed by seven devils, and decided that the term might well encompass such physical infirmities as blindness.⁷² The draft survives as a fragment entitled *Mary Magdalen: The New Apocrypha* which has been preserved within Caine's papers.⁷³

Caine's *Mary Magdalen* shares some common ground with *The Scapegoat*. Mary, like Naomi, is a long-awaited child, the daughter of Matthias of Magdala. Matthias is a wealthy man who works as a steward for the corrupt and tyrannical King Herod, a position he holds as a reward for helping Herod crush the insurrection of Judas of Galilee. As Mary grows, it becomes obvious that she is possessed of seven devils; 'a devil of blindness, a devil of deafness, a dumb devil and devils of madness'. Like Naomi, she lives 'as a soul locked into a prison house of flesh'. Matthias is affected by the preaching of John the Baptist, and he realises that Mary's condition is punishment for his 'unrighteousness' in extorting taxes from the people to 'keep up the court of a corrupt and useless prince'. Just as Israel approaches Mohammed of Mequinez, Matthias seeks guidance from John who instructs him to give away his wealth. As a result, Matthias resigns his stewardship which incurs Herod's wrath and reduces him to poverty, but ensures that Mary is restored to health.⁷⁴ Ultimately Caine decided against completing this book, having begun to doubt the right 'of any imaginative writer to intrude imagination upon so sacred a story, wherein the facts alone were so great and solemn'.⁷⁵ Although Caine used the Bible as a basis for many of his novels, he preferred to confront religious questions through historicised and

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 28 November 1891, p.352.

⁷³ *Mary Magdalen: The New Apocrypha*, Hall Caine Papers, Box 32.

⁷⁴ *Mary Magdalen: The New Apocrypha*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵ Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 28 November 1891, p.353.

contemporary social situations rather than directly re-writing the Bible stories as fiction.

Having abandoned plans for a romance based around Mary Magdalen, Caine still hoped to explore his idea of a soul 'locked into the casket'.⁷⁶ Similar terms are employed when writing about Naomi on several occasions in *The Scapegoat*. Israel hopes that 'the casket of her soul' will open to receive the word of God on Judgement Day.⁷⁷ Caine also describes Naomi's spirit as being 'in chains and in prison'⁷⁸ and as 'a living soul locked in a tabernacle of flesh'.⁷⁹

Significantly, in writing *The Scapegoat*, Caine thus translated a Christian narrative into a Judaic one, and the presence of a Muslim character in Mohammed of Mequinez, who uses both the Koran and the Bible in his preaching is a foretaste of his desire to explore the concept of fundamental unity within the three Abrahamic religions, a notion which Caine developed more fully many years later when writing *The White Prophet*.

Sometime after the novel was published, Caine argued that the 'real motive of the book centres in the character of Israel ben Oliel, in the physical and psychological experiences of Naomi, and in the relations of these to each other'.⁸⁰ Israel clearly displays characteristics of the wandering Jew – he is an outsider from boyhood, rejected by his father and his mother's family; in adulthood, he lives apart from the rest of his community and is ejected from his home after resigning his office with the Basha. There is also a supernatural element present in Israel's visions of God and in Naomi's cures (despite Caine's somewhat tenuous natural explanations for the latter). However, this does not invalidate Caine's project of creating a model for specifically Jewish heroism, and Israel was widely accepted as such. Moreover, *The Scapegoat* attracted significant praise from the Jewish community. The *Jewish Chronicle*

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ TS, p.156 (Chapter XIII).

⁷⁸ TS, p.36 (Chapter III); p. 93 (Chapter VIII).

⁷⁹ TS, p.55 (Chapter V).

⁸⁰ Preface to the American edition of *The Scapegoat* (1892; New York: D. Appleton and Company Publishers, 1899), vii.

compared the novel with George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, saying that whilst Eliot had portrayed the ideal aspects of Jewish life, Caine, against the background of a 'touching and impressive story,' had described the 'strangely neglected' aspects, 'the pathetic side of Jewish life, the picturesqueness of the real as distinct from the ideal'.⁸¹ Several months later, the *Chronicle* renewed its praise of *The Scapegoat*, commenting that:

A few more bold experiments like this [the character of Israel] will destroy forever the silly superstition that to create an elevated type of Jewish character spells failure and unpopularity.⁸²

Later commentators concurred with the classification of *The Scapegoat* as a novel which gave a strongly positive portrayal of a Jewish character. In his comprehensive account of the figure of the Jew in English literature, Montague Modder described Caine's Israel as 'a man of indomitable spirit', who 'in a strong and unflinching sense of God, in love for wife and daughter, in invincibility of spirit' was 'an example of the highest type which Judaism has produced'.⁸³

Unusually, Caine also portrays a physically attractive Jew. Israel is a 'comely boy, quick and bright', 'tall and very sedate' as a youth,⁸⁴ and 'noble' as a man,⁸⁵ all of which contrasts with the Jew in novels by Caine's contemporaries. George du Maurier's Svengali is 'both tawdry and dirty in person',⁸⁶ with a 'dirty mane'⁸⁷ and 'bold, black, beady Jew's eyes'.⁸⁸

However, closer scrutiny of the novel complicates this characterization. At the outset, Caine strongly stresses Israel's Jewish cultural identity. His betrothal ceremony and his celebration of Passover are described.⁸⁹ Although Israel is

⁸¹ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 September 1891.

⁸² *The Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1892.

⁸³ Montague Franklyn Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England* (1939; New York and Philadelphia: Meridian Books and The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), p.297.

⁸⁴ *TS*, pp.2-3 (Chapter I).

⁸⁵ *TS*, p.9 (Chapter I).

⁸⁶ George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (1894; Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2009), p.39 (Part First).

⁸⁷ *T*, p.43 (Part Second).

⁸⁸ *T*, p.44 (Part Second).

⁸⁹ *TS*, pp.10; 19-20 (Chapter I).

embittered, alienated from his co-religionists, and no longer attending the synagogue after Naomi's birth, he retains a strong sense of his spiritual Jewishness; 'He was a Jew to the inmost fibre of his being'.⁹⁰ He scrupulously observes the Jewish burial rites when his wife dies, because 'he was still a Jew, with Jewish customs, if he had lost the Jewish faith'.⁹¹ Although Israel is 'estranged' from God, he believes it is his duty to Naomi 'that he should tell her of God and reveal the word of the Lord to her',⁹² and he decides to read to her each evening from the Book of the Law, even though she can neither see nor hear.

At this point in the novel, Caine is suggesting that Judaism is both a cultural *and* religious identity – and the former inheres even when religious observance falls away. This was true of his close friend, Israel Zangwill, who although no longer an observant Jew, retained a strong awareness of his Jewish identity – as reflected in his commitment to the Zionist movement. However, Zangwill recognised that non-observance could be the precursor to assimilation into the majority Gentile population and the disappearance of both Jewish culture and religion.⁹³ Caine shows such assimilation and abandonment of Jewish identity in positive terms. Israel gains in moral stature as his 'Jewishness' becomes increasingly blurred, an ongoing process which begins after his vision of God, when he seeks spiritual guidance from the Muslim holy man, Mohammed of Mequinez. He adopts the *djellab*, the robe worn by Muslim inhabitants of Morocco, as a disguise when he goes out to repay money and goods he took from the poor during his career. Israel then undergoes a period of intense soul-searching as he questions the nature of his relationship to God and man, closely examining the reasons why he feels compelled to make restitution for his unfair extortion of taxes. Israel decides his motives are selfish – he is trying to bribe God to give Naomi hearing, speech, and sight. His love for Naomi helps his moral reformation

⁹⁰ TS, p.64 (Chapter VI).

⁹¹ TS, p.50 (Chapter V).

⁹² TS, p.65 (Chapter V).

⁹³ Udelson, Joseph H., *Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1990), pp. 157,159.

as he overcomes feelings of bitterness to experience sympathy with his fellow human beings, whether they are Muslim or Jew:

The care of the child [Naomi] had softened him. It had brought him to look on other children with tenderness, and looking tenderly on other children had led him to think of other fathers with compassion, young or old, powerful or weak, mighty or mean, they were all as little children – helpless children who would all sleep together in the same bed soon.⁹⁴

Once he has established the connection between his actions and Naomi's condition, Israel is open to reform even at the cost of his material wealth. His death unites the Jewish and Muslim populations of Tetuan, as 'a vast concourse of Moors and Jews' march out of the town together to bury him, having realised that he had attempted to repay the unjust taxes he had collected.⁹⁵ This interpretation of Israel's character involves a clear shift of emphasis away from his Judaism, a point that went unremarked by Caine's contemporaries. The less culturally Jewish Israel becomes, the more he appears to be revered.

However, it should be remembered that Israel ben Oliel is in fact only half Jewish, the son of a Moroccan Sephardic Jew and an English mother, who spends his formative years in England and dreams of returning there with his daughter. On his marriage, he builds his new home 'partly in the Moorish and partly in the English fashion',⁹⁶ which sets him apart from the Jewish community. Israel is further isolated from the Jews of Tetuan due to his work for the Muslim authorities. He lives for more than seventeen years 'without being of them, never entering a synagogue, never observing a fast, never joining in a feast'.⁹⁷ Israel's co-religionists are described by Caine in negative terms and are typified by Reuben Malik, the jeweller and usurer who

⁹⁴ *TS*, p.84 (Chapter VIII).

⁹⁵ *TS*, p.363 (Chapter XXVIII).

⁹⁶ *TS*, p.13 (Chapter I).

⁹⁷ *TS*, p.186 (Chapter XV).

cheats Israel when he tries to sell his late wife's jewellery to repay the taxes he has unjustly collected.⁹⁸

Israel reads the Torah to Naomi, not just hoping that she will preserve her Jewish identity but with a stronger desire that she will grow up with a belief in God. Following his vision,⁹⁹ the focus shifts from the 'heroic Jew' to the depiction of an individual who accepts that he has sinned and sets out to make atonement. Israel's racial, cultural and religious identity which was initially strongly asserted becomes less pronounced during the course of the novel – as he becomes a better person, losing his 'Jewishness' to practise a broad, inclusive type of monotheism which embraces Christian teachings of charity and forgiveness. Implicitly recognising this, Blathwayt claimed that *The Scapegoat* itself, with its emphasis on atonement, was 'the most Christian novel in the language' with Israel ben Oriel 'a Christ-like character'. Caine has, in his view, shown 'a man of complex nature, having great capacity for both good and evil'. Israel works out his redemption, rising 'to the highest possibilities of human nature', as he resigns his office with the Basha and he is ejected from the town.¹⁰⁰ An American paper, the *Lowell Arena*, commented on this aspect as follows: 'The story of Israel's downfall and his march through Tetuan on the back of an ass strangely recalls the sufferings and disgrace of another Jew many centuries ago [...]'.¹⁰¹

As Israel's moral reformation proceeds and Naomi's senses are restored, he starts to demonstrate specifically Christian virtues in the face of adversity. He courageously faces an angry Jewish mob who intend to kill him; offering no resistance to their attack, he does not 'cry out or make any struggle for his life'.¹⁰² It emerges that the Jewish community of Tetuan believe that a lengthy drought is divine punishment for Israel 'having sold himself to their masters and enemies, the Moors, against the hope and interest of his own people', and they put him on trial, condemning

⁹⁸ *TS*, pp.169-71 (Chapter XIV).

⁹⁹ *TS*, pp.83-96 (Chapter VIII).

¹⁰⁰ 'A Trilogy of Novels', *The Victorian Magazine*, n.d., pp.611-15 (p.613), Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I (1887-95) p.133.

¹⁰¹ *Lowell Arena*, 4 October 1891.

¹⁰² *TS*, p.197 (Chapter XV).

him to death in his absence.¹⁰³ However, they realise that their sentence has no legal validity. Like the Pharisees who encouraged the Roman authorities to prosecute Christ, the Jews of Tetuan consider an appeal to the Moorish government to punish Israel.¹⁰⁴

There are further parallels between Israel and Christ. He is ‘mocked by soldiers’, ‘spat upon and smitten’¹⁰⁵ and his expulsion from Tetuan is compared to Christ’s entry in to Jerusalem. Israel, like Jesus, is seated on a donkey, but he is followed, not by shouts of welcome, but by the insults of his fellow Jews, who mock him with shouts of ‘God Bless our Lord!’, ‘Saviour of his people’, and ‘King of Men’.¹⁰⁶ On one occasion, Israel appears to align himself with the Gentiles. In ‘a wild torrent of madness’ at the treatment he has received from his co-religionists he rounds on them, calling them ‘Harpagon’ and ‘Shylock’, both characters synonymous with the ‘wicked’ Jew created by Christian writers.¹⁰⁷

Rosenberg criticises such Christian attributes in a Jewish character, citing Dickens’ *Riah* and Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* as two examples. Although he does not mention Caine specifically, he argues that many nineteenth century novelists felt obliged to ‘disinfect’ their Jewish characters with ‘the baptismal sprinkler’ before the reading public could be brought to keep company with them and concludes that:

The decent Jew [...] is decent in so far as he acts out and in so far as he pays lip-service to all the specifically New Testament virtues.¹⁰⁸

Ultimately however, Caine’s portrayal of Israel is far more complicated and nuanced than this. The fact that Israel, a Jew, acts in a Christian manner reflects the theme of religious unity in the novel. Judaism and Christianity converge in his character and in the closing chapters, Islam, Judaism and Christianity *all* fuse in the

¹⁰³ *TS*, p.186 (Chapter XV).

¹⁰⁴ *TS*, pp.186-91 (Chapter XV).

¹⁰⁵ *TS*, p.253 (Chapter XIX).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Rosenberg, p.268; *TS*, p.21 (Chapter II).

¹⁰⁸ Rosenberg, p.267.

Mahdi, the future husband of Naomi who unites all three religions in his preaching. On another level, Israel is also a typical Caine character – an individual who has erred and feels morally compelled to atone for his transgressions. Caine insisted that an author act as a ‘temporal providence’ to ensure that justice was seen to be done. The ‘human heart’ would forgo the ‘clap-trap’ of wedding bells and would:

Suffer itself to see the hero die, if only he dies in a good cause, if only his death is the crown of his life, if only it can feel that, though everything passes away from him – youth, fortune, love – one thing remains – spiritual compensation.¹⁰⁹

Motifs of self-sacrifice and atonement recur throughout Caine’s work – in *The Master of Man*, for example, it is not enough that Victor saves Bessie from the gallows, he must completely atone for the seduction and its consequences by the sacrifice of all that he has worked for. Often Caine’s flawed heroes fail to see fulfilment of their life’s work – like Moses they are denied entry into their ‘promised land’. In *The Eternal City*, David Rossi murders Baron Bonelli and subsequently disappears from public view – playing no part in the implementation of his social and political reforms. Whilst in *The Prodigal Son*, Oscar Stephenson abandons his wife and daughter and leaves his brother responsible for his gambling debts. Oscar makes his fortune, and returns home to reclaim his daughter. However, she prefers to stay with Oscar’s brother Magnus, and after discharging Magnus’s debts, Oscar dies in an avalanche on his way to board a ship.¹¹⁰ Similarly, although Israel is shown to be a reformed character in the closing chapters of *The Scapegoat*, he dies before he can realise his dream of returning to England with Naomi. Caine believed that suffering and atonement were ‘the most serious things in human life’.¹¹¹

So, although *The Scapegoat* encompasses some elements of Caine’s original intent to explore the ‘soul locked in a casket’, and is a sympathetic portrayal of a Jew,

¹⁰⁹ ‘Moral Responsibility in the Novel: An Address to the Nineteenth Century Club, New York’, *The New York Times*, 14 November 1895.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Prodigal Son* (1904; London: William Heinemann, 1921).

¹¹¹ Blathwayt, *Wit and Wisdom*, 22 August 1891, unpaginated.

it is, equally importantly, a means by which he explores the potential for religious unity whilst returning to his favoured themes of sin, atonement and redemption. Caine has radically and effectively demonstrated the interplay between Christianity and Judaism by taking a Christian narrative (Mary Magdalen) and transforming it into a Jewish one, and during the course of the narrative Israel ben Oliel acquires specific Christian attributes.

Caine believed that any union of Christian denominations must include Jews and Muslims or it would be 'only a half-union of God's people'.¹¹² Later in life, he remarked how observations made during his extensive travels had shown him that:

In the great and tragic moments of life, all religions are one religion, fostering the same hopes, dreaming the same dreams, and even making the same manifestations.¹¹³

This fundamental expression of unity and tolerance is found throughout the novel. When Naomi develops a fever, Israel's manservant Ali consults his former schoolmaster who prays over her. This individual is:

A liberated slave from the Sahara, just able to read the Koran and the Torah, and willing to teach each impartially, according to his knowledge, for he was neither a Jew nor a Muslim, but a little of both, as he used to say, and not too much of either.¹¹⁴

Caine describes a gathering of Muslims and Jews who unite in prayer for rainfall to destroy the eggs of the locusts threatening the destruction of their crops:

It was a strange sight to look upon in that land of intolerance – the haughty Moor and the despised Jew, with all petty hatreds sunk out of sight and

¹¹² *The Christian World*, 29 December 1892.

¹¹³ WIWTWP, p.43; 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind', *The Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

¹¹⁴ *TS*, p.133 (Chapter XII).

forgotten in the grip of death that threatened both alike, walking and praying in the public streets together.¹¹⁵

Budgett Meakin pointed out that such tolerance and cooperation was an ‘improbability’, but considered the scene in the novel to be ‘perfectly excusable’ because Caine was describing not only Morocco, but humanity.¹¹⁶ For Caine, tolerance did not imply a lack of belief, although in the eyes of many it might suggest a dilution of faith to a point at which it becomes meaningless. He was extremely aware of this, and took time out in his pamphlet ‘Why I Wrote The White Prophet’ to make the point that he hoped his readers would not conclude that his ‘toleration meant indifference and that [he] did not care enough for religion to fight for its principles’.¹¹⁷

Naomi’s marriage is a further expression of Caine’s belief in religious unity and his hopes for mutual understanding and tolerance. In both versions of the novel, Naomi marries outside the Jewish faith, with Israel’s blessing. The marriage of a Jewess or Jew to a non-Jew was rare, controversial and inevitably opposed by the couple’s family and community: Nina Balatka and Anton Trendellsohn in Trollope’s *Nina Balatka*, and Catherine Arrowpoint and Klesmer in *Daniel Deronda* are well-documented examples. In Disraeli’s *Tancred* (1847), the hero falls in love with the beautiful Jewess Eva, but the novel’s conclusion suggests that a marriage is unlikely. Tancred’s parents arrive in the Holy Land, to return their only son and heir to England. In view of their disapproval of his journey to Palestine it seems probable that they would prefer a more suitable match.¹¹⁸ At the time Caine was writing, considerations of religion and race vastly outweighed love and affection, but this did not influence Caine, who approved such a union between his characters to reinforce his point regarding the oneness of all religions.

¹¹⁵ *TS*, p.173 (Chapter XIV).

¹¹⁶ *The Times of Morocco*, 10 October 1891.

¹¹⁷ *WIWTWP*, p.42

¹¹⁸ Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred* (1847; London: Longmans, Green and Co., n.d.), pp. 486-87 (Book VI, Chapter XII); Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (1966; New York: St Martin’s Press, 1967), p.205.

It seems that Caine's wish to promote this vision was the primary motive for his politically radical revisions to the novel. The first version was serialised in the *Illustrated London News* from April 1890 onwards, and was published in two volumes in September 1891 by William Heinemann. The second, also published by Heinemann, appeared as single volume in 1892. In the first version, it is not the Mahdi who saves Naomi, but a shadowy, unnamed Englishman who appears only fleetingly at the start and in the closing chapters of the novel. He falls in love with Naomi after the briefest of encounters, marries her and the couple settle in England. Given that this version was in widespread circulation for less than twelve months, most of Caine's readers would have been more familiar with the 1892 edition, which was published for the first time in America in 1899, and was the model for European translations.

Caine accounted for the amendments in the preface to the 1899 American edition. He described a period of ill health due to a 'malarial trouble', contracted during his stay in Morocco in early 1891, whilst carrying out research for the novel. The illness 'rendered any literary effort doubly difficult' for a period of several months, but Caine's engagement to the periodicals in which the book was serialised compelled him to continue the story 'at a nervous tension that [was] painful to remember'.¹¹⁹ However, since the bulk of the novel except for the opening paragraphs and the conclusion remained unaltered, Caine simply seems to have made revisions which significantly develop the role of the Mahdi, Mohammed of Mequinez, allowing a much fuller, and much more radical, expression of his belief in the common ground shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Mohammed of Mequinez is the forerunner to Ishmael Ameer in Caine's later novel *The White Prophet* (1909) and reflects his ideal regarding religious belief and observance. Mohammed gives up his inherited wealth 'at the call of duty and the cry of misery',¹²⁰ to establish a purer form of Islam, which rejects the grasping materialism of Abd-er-Rahman and has much in common with Christianity and Judaism. His

¹¹⁹ Preface to the American edition of *The Scapegoat* (New York: D. Appleton and Company Publishers, 1899), v.

¹²⁰ *TS*, p.97 (Chapter IX).

followers were to be 'Not dissenters from the Koran, but stricter conformers to it; not Nazarenes and not Jews, yet followers of Jesus in their customs and of Moses in their doctrines'.¹²¹ Hence he becomes the spiritual leader of a band of impoverished victims of the Sultan, the Basha and, of course, Israel himself. Mohammed resembles John the Baptist, 'clad in a piece of untanned camel skin which reached to his knees and was belted about the waist'. He is described as a 'follower of *Seedna Isa* (Jesus of Nazareth)'¹²² and, in a speech which recalls Christ's instructions to his disciples, Mohammed urges his supporters to be:

[...] Despisers of riches and lovers of poverty. No man among them was to have more than another [. . .] They were to be ministers of peace, and if any man did them violence they were not to resist it.¹²³

Mohammed advises Israel to give away his wealth and make restitution to those he has wronged. Once made aware of Naomi's condition, he is sympathetic to Israel, telling him that 'God is good' and that he should 'Go his way in trust'.¹²⁴ He reappears later in the novel to confront the Basha, demanding freedom for a group of prisoners who have been unjustly jailed, and to plead for Naomi's release from prison, telling the Basha that she is guilty 'of no fault but love of her father and no crime but fidelity to her faith'.¹²⁵ Finally, after bringing about the reunion of Israel and Naomi, Mohammed falls in love with, and offers to take care of, Naomi, after Israel's death.¹²⁶

In a sense, this is all quite radical – because Islam is seen to be the arbitrator and saviour of the Jewish character. Caine's desire for closer ties and understanding between Jews, Christians and Muslims are further illustrated in the novel's ending, with Naomi's marriage to a non-Jew. As will be seen later, Caine went on to develop

¹²¹ *TS*, p.98 (Chapter IX).

¹²² *TS*, p.313 (Chapter XXIII).

¹²³ *TS*, p.98 (Chapter IX).

¹²⁴ *TS*, p.330 (Chapter XXV).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *TS*, p.362 (Chapter XXVIII).

his beliefs regarding the fundamental unity of the Abrahamic religions in *The White Prophet*.

Caine's Relationship with the Jewish Community

The Scapegoat was also important as marking the start of Caine's close political involvement with the Jewish community, and it must also be read in that context. As has already been seen, the fact that the novel was researched and written against a background of growing anti-Semitism in Russia and Eastern Europe attracted interest from Jewish community leaders in Britain, and in September 1891 Caine met the Reverend Hermann Adler, Chief Rabbi and chairman of the Russo-Jewish Committee, (Figure10) set up in the 1880s to organise relief for Russia's persecuted Jews.¹²⁷ Adler had been favourably impressed by *The Scapegoat*. After reading the novel, he described his 'genuine gratification from a tale conceived with so much tenderness and such exquisite insight'.¹²⁸ Consequently, he requested that Caine travel to Eastern Europe on behalf of the Committee to investigate the situation of the Jews in Russia and Poland, where 'terrible pogroms' were resulting in the flight of many Jews, often to Britain and the United States and also to discover how money raised by the Committee for Jewish schools in Russia was being used. Adler asked Caine to make the journey partly because he was sure that no Jew would be permitted to enter Russia.¹²⁹ He suggested that Caine, 'with his known sympathy', for Jews, might gather material for a book which would help their cause, but he requested secrecy regarding links between the Committee and any future novel. Having studied *The Scapegoat*, Adler was of the opinion that no one could be better qualified than Caine 'in embodying the woes of the Jews in a soul stirring romance'.¹³⁰

The proposed novel, however, was never written. Caine stated his intention to write a story entitled *The Jew*, based on a love triangle involving the Christian governor of a Russian province, a Jew and a Jewess, but concluded that the task was

¹²⁷ Allen, p.214-15.

¹²⁸ Letter to Caine from Herman Adler, dated 7 October 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 58.

¹²⁹ Allen, p.214.

¹³⁰ Letter to Caine from Herman Adler, dated 7 October 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 58.

impossible. 'I wanted the experience of a life', he said when interviewed in 1895, but 'I could not enter into competition in their own field with the great Russian novelists', and he concluded that 'it could not be done'.¹³¹ The Jewish story was nevertheless adapted, in part, to become Caine's next novel, *The Manxman* (1894), with class conflicts between the main characters replacing racial differences, despite Caine's conviction that the latter afforded greater dramatic contrast.¹³²

However, the idea of a 'Russian Jewish' novel did remain with Caine for many years, demonstrating the lasting impact of the limited time he spent in Russia. In 1902, he described how he wrote the draft of a play in which the central characters were a Jewish husband and wife and the Russian governor of the province in which they lived. The husband, the leader of a revolutionary movement, was subject to the death penalty. The governor induced the wife to denounce her husband under the promise of sparing his life. On discovering the identity of his betrayer, the husband cursed his wife 'as his worst enemy' –since although she had saved his life, his cause and his hopes were destroyed. Caine described the story as 'a new version of the old story of Samson and Delilah' – however, it was never performed and eventually Caine was to use this concept as the basis for the later novel *The Eternal City*.¹³³

Reports of Caine's Russian trip appeared in the press from late September 1891. The *Pall Mall Gazette* commented that Caine was 'touched by the distinction of the choice which had fallen upon him' and that he had initially declined Adler's request that he visit Russia on behalf of the Russo-Jewish committee, feeling that the difficulties attending the commission were 'too serious'. However, the Chief Rabbi and his friends urged him to accept and it was decided that 'Mr. Hall Caine is to go to Russia as soon as he can'.¹³⁴ The next day yet another article giving details of the projected visit to Russia, entitled 'Mr. Hall Caine and the Russian Jews' appeared in

¹³¹ Sherard, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, p.574; Kenyon, p.168.

¹³² Sherard, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, p.574.

¹³³ Preface to the 1902 Popular version of *The Eternal City*, v.

¹³⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 September 1891

The Publisher's Circular, also stressing the gravity of Caine's mission and its potential benefits in alleviating the plight of Russia's Jewish population:

It is rarely indeed that a commission of such seriousness and responsibility is offered to a popular author by the representatives of a great people as that which Chief Rabbi Dr Adler, on behalf of his co-religionists, has lately proposed to Mr. Hall Caine. Having exhausted all ordinary means of abating the terrible persecutions under which the Jews in Russia are now suffering, it has been thought by some members of the Russo-Jewish Committee that 'the powerful pen of an imaginative writer who has lately shown his strong sympathy with the Jewish people in another land of persecution (Morocco) might perhaps move the public so deeply that even the Russian Government could not be indifferent to the outburst of indignation that would be evoked'".¹³⁵

The *Illustrated London News*, within which *The Scapegoat* was serialised, featured a lengthy article on the background to Caine's visit, illustrated by images of Russian Jews and Caine himself (Figure 11) The article pointed out that prose fiction had become 'in the hands of writers of genius, an instrument of greater power', and it provides compelling evidence that Caine's views on religious issues were taken seriously. Indeed, the writer cited the example of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in striking a blow at 'the American institution of negro slavery'; the clear implication being that Caine's writing might perform a similar function in publicising the persecution of Russian Jewry.¹³⁶

There was concern amongst the Jewish community that such extensive publicity might threaten the entire project. Adler wrote to Caine, stating that he was 'deeply grieved' at seeing the 'mention of their confidential correspondence in the papers'.¹³⁷ He went on to inform him that members of the Russo-Jewish Committee

¹³⁵ *Publishers Circular*, 26 September 1891.

¹³⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1891.

¹³⁷ Letter to Caine from Herman Adler, dated 7 October 1891, Hall Caine Papers, Box 58.

feared that the breach of confidentiality might endanger the mission, as the Russians, once made aware of purpose of Caine's visit, would place obstacles in his way.

Adler requested a public statement from Caine to the effect that he had received no commission from the Committee.¹³⁸ Caine's response to this request was a letter to *The Times*, in which he admitted informing the *Publisher's Circular* of his correspondence with the Chief Rabbi regarding the forthcoming visit, so that he would not be going among the Russians 'in silence and secrecy and as a spy upon the land'.¹³⁹ Caine also distanced himself from Adler, and the Russo-Jewish Committee, by claiming that the suggested visit was the result of his own desire to witness at first-hand the treatment of Jews in Russia. It seems likely that Caine intended to pacify Adler and minimise any threat to the mission resulting from the publicity, whilst also protecting his own position.

This is one of many controversies coincident with publication of Caine's novels, such as the Caine-Corelli 'feud' over *The Eternal City* described in Chapter Three. Such 'controversies' were excellent marketing strategies and Caine clearly was not beyond setting the hare running himself. Samuel Norris, the Manx political reformer, a personal and professional acquaintance of Caine, claimed that the latter 'sought and lived on publicity', taking advantage of the fact that British journalism was moving away from reporting events to include 'personal paragraphs, preliminary puffs, and articles on the ethical and religious beliefs and social and political aims of novelists'.¹⁴⁰ Caine, a former journalist, was indeed well placed to exploit such free publicity, and probably believed (with some good cause, as the press articles quoted earlier suggest) that being serious about religio-political action and generating publicity for his novels were not mutually exclusive (so often a critical assumption when it comes to Caine). In fact, it was rather the opposite since, in addition to increasing sales of *The Scapegoat* and any future novel based on his Russian trip,

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Letter from Caine to *The Times*, 12 October 1891.

¹⁴⁰ Norris, p.16.

Caine recognized that the accompanying publicity would also arouse sympathy for the persecuted Jews in Eastern Europe.

In the event, the mission to Russia was not a success, for reasons which were unconnected with the unwelcome publicity. Caine's departure was delayed by a recurrence of the malarial fever he contracted during a visit to Morocco when researching for *The Scapegoat*,¹⁴¹ and by the birth of his second son, Derwent, on 12 September 1891.¹⁴² The Russian famine that winter produced food shortages and riots, and resulted in Caine's departure being postponed until June 1892.¹⁴³ Additionally, a cholera outbreak meant that the interior of the country was closed off in an attempt to halt the spread of infection.¹⁴⁴ Caine eventually succeeded in reaching the Pale of Settlement, the small area of land on the borders of Russia and Poland to which the Jewish population was confined. Once there, he 'saw as much of frontier life amongst the Jews as possible, and found them like hunted dogs'. Travel beyond the Pale proved difficult due to the cholera outbreak, and Caine, fearful of his health, cut short his mission.¹⁴⁵

The visit to Russia affected Caine deeply. He was touched by the way the Jews gathered together in 'an intensity of prayer' during the cholera epidemic which revived boyhood memories of Primitive Methodist prayer meetings in Liverpool during a similar outbreak.¹⁴⁶ His perception of the identical reaction of the Russian Jews and British Methodists to the same threat reinforced Caine's belief that mankind shared a common impulse which transcended differences in culture and faith. Furthermore, the visit was to increase his sympathy for, and engagement with, the Jewish community. Caine wrote a series of articles for *The Times*¹⁴⁷ in which he described the cholera epidemic in the Pale of Jewish settlement, and he also addressed Jewish groups about

¹⁴¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 July 1891.

¹⁴² Allen, p.216.

¹⁴³ Allen, pp.217, 219.

¹⁴⁴ Sherard, *Windsor Magazine*, July 1895, p.573.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ WWTWP p.42; 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind', *The Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

¹⁴⁷ *The Times*, 17-18 September 1892.

his experiences in Russia. The *Jewish Chronicle* described a ‘sympathetic address’ at the Jewish Working Men’s Club in London in early December 1892, in which Caine gave an account of the scenes he had witnessed during his journey down the Russian frontier, and of different aspects of Jewish life in Russia, including dress, education, Jews as farmers, artisans and soldiers, and the Jewish pedlar, a familiar figure in the Russian countryside.¹⁴⁸ His address was received with enthusiasm - Caine himself described ‘the tears, the laughter, the applause, the wild embraces’ of the crowd,¹⁴⁹ and Zangwill wrote to Caine to tell him that he had also heard ‘whispers of a spell-bound audience’.¹⁵⁰

Caine recognised that the Russian Jewish community also had its shortcomings. Specifically, he was critical of its attitude towards education which led to rejection of Nicholas I’s reforms. These were aimed at improving educational standards among Jews and encouraging assimilation - Nicholas had promised to grant full Russian citizenship to Jewish university graduates. A section of the Orthodox Jewish community objected on the basis that a university education was deemed incompatible with the practice of Judaism. Many rabbis considered it impious for a Jew to learn any language other than Hebrew, ‘the sacred tongue’, and a Rabbinical ‘taboo’ discouraged the study of Western science.¹⁵¹

Caine’s plain speaking was admired. ‘Championship of the Russian Jew against the inhuman policy of his ruler is clearly genuine when it co-exists with a recognition of his shortcomings’, said *The Jewish Chronicle*.¹⁵² Like his courting of publicity against the Chief Rabbi’s wishes, Caine’s words at the address also display a contradiction. He attempts to reconcile sympathy for the sufferings of the Russian Jews with disapproval of the strong religious orthodoxy and narrow exclusivity which

¹⁴⁸ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 1892.

¹⁴⁹ Kenyon, pp.168-69.

¹⁵⁰ Letter to Caine from Israel Zangwill, dated 13 December 1892, Hall Caine Papers, Box 52.

¹⁵¹ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 1892.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

isolated them from the wider community in which they lived, an isolation which will in itself have accounted for some of the animosity they encountered.

The author's disapproval of such rigid orthodoxy would also be shown in his fictional depiction of another Jewish character many years later – the Polish Jew Israel Abramovitch in *The Woman Thou Gavest Me*. He is a grasping employer of mainly Jewish sweated labour, who is nonetheless 'deeply religious in his own way' with his strict observance of the Levitical Law.¹⁵³ However, not only does this preclude integration, it also prevents extension of sympathy or understanding towards others. He dismisses the novel's heroine, Mary O'Neill, on discovering that she is the mother of an illegitimate child; 'in better days our Law of Moses would have stoned her'.¹⁵⁴

Undoubtedly, Caine favoured a significant degree of assimilation. In his speech on 'The Jew in Literature', he said:

Certainly it does seem that if the walls of the Ghetto are fallen, the Jewish company is still undispersed. The invisible bulwarks about the Jew appear formidable to some Christians.¹⁵⁵

Neither did Caine believe that it was necessary to adopt distinctive dress to maintain a sense of Jewish cultural or religious identity:

It seems to me that the Jewish dress is not a matter of much concern [...] Personally I should say that the costume does not make the man, and that the kaftan [traditional Jewish dress] does not make the Jew, and you are not a whit less faithful to your race because you are willing to adopt the costume of the people amongst whom you live.¹⁵⁶

Caine expressed profound sympathy with the orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe primarily due to his respect and admiration for their spirituality, the intensity of their faith, and in particular their strong and tenacious conviction that they would one day

¹⁵³ *TWTGM*, p.444 (Sixth Part, Ninety-Seventh Chapter).

¹⁵⁴ *TWTGM*, pp.492-93 (Sixth Part, One Hundred and Second Chapter).

¹⁵⁵ *The Literary Review*, 20 May 1892, p.482.

¹⁵⁶ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 1892.

come into possession of their promised land. He recalled witnessing their ‘patient suffering and their religious devotion’ during his visit to the Russian frontier and the hospitality they had offered to him, a stranger in their midst.¹⁵⁷

One of the things I saw most clearly and remember with the deepest feelings was the pathetic outlook of the poor Jew in the little squalid towns of the pale of Jewish settlement to return some day to the land of promise and the home of his ancestors.¹⁵⁸

Quite apart from his Russian mission, Caine’s relationship with the British Jewish community was friendly; following his 1892 speech to the Maccabean Society, he became the first Christian to be awarded honorary membership of that organisation.¹⁵⁹ Caine and his wife were sufficiently well acquainted with Hermann Adler and his family to be offered an invitation to an ‘at home’ at their residence. Adler’s wife Rachel praised Caine’s London speech at the Jewish Working Men’s club, in a letter to Mrs Hall Caine:

I hope your husband was not fatigued from his magnificent address. We were all so excited that we could hardly sleep. What a wonderful faculty that is – the power of such vivid delineation.¹⁶⁰

Reflecting its appeal to the Jewish community, *The Scapegoat* was translated into Yiddish, for publication in instalments in the *Jewish Express*. Caine wrote to the editor of the paper, stating that it gave him ‘great pleasure’ to assent to the translation of his novel. He also took the opportunity to offer those Jewish people for whom Yiddish was their only language ‘the expression of my sympathy and esteem’.¹⁶¹

Caine strongly objected to the proposed restrictions on ‘alien immigration’ to Britain from Eastern Europe which were under discussion at this time, and which he

¹⁵⁷ *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 17 September 1897.

¹⁵⁸ Draft of a speech Caine delivered at the Article Club, London, on 20 November 1901, Hall Caine Papers, Box 34.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Literary Jottings’ *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 4 June 1891.

¹⁶⁰ Letter from Mrs Rachel Adler to Mrs Mary Caine, dated 12 December 1892, Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I, (1887-95).

¹⁶¹ *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 17 September 1897.

viewed as an expression of anti-Semitism, given that the migrants were overwhelmingly Jewish in origin. In 1902, a British Royal Commission on Alien Immigration had been appointed, which included the prominent Jew Lord Rothschild as one of its members.¹⁶² Although the Aliens Act passed through Parliament in 1905, Caine adopted a pro-Jewish stance, and protested against the Act both on political and religious grounds:

A law to restrict alien immigration in the East End of London can only have the effect of an anti-Semitic movement. The destitute alien in Whitechapel is a Russian Jew, a Polish Jew, or a German Jew, and no measure can be made to restrict or expel him that will not take the colour of an anti-Jewish crusade.

‘God forbid’, says Mr. Hall Caine in concluding his protest, ‘that at the call of a short-sighted commercialism, a bad political economy, and a false national spirit, Britain should go back on the principles which have made her rich and free.’¹⁶³

However, this is not the most powerful evidence of Caine’s earnest feelings towards the Jewish community. Ultimately, this is reflected in the fact that he was to become a committed supporter of the Zionist movement, and this is considered below.

Caine, Zangwill and the Zionist Movement

Caine insisted that the Jews had a valid claim to a Palestinian homeland; Jews had lived there for a period of 1400 years during which they had established a great monarchy, created great literature and produced a line of prominent men, culminating in Christ himself, and he drew an unfavourable comparison with the subsequent period of Arab domination which had:

¹⁶² Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Anti-Semitism: A History* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2002), p.229.

¹⁶³ Article by Caine in *Household Words*, date unknown, cited in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 March 1902.

[...] done nothing for the country but strip it of its forests and allow it to degenerate, by neglect and incapacity and misuse, from a garden to a desert.¹⁶⁴

Vivien Allen correctly believed that Caine's interest in Zionism was nurtured and encouraged by Zangwill. However, on occasions their views diverged perhaps more than Allen recognised.¹⁶⁵ During the early 1890s Caine encountered Chovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), a movement which originated in Russia in 1882 as a populist response to officially sanctioned pogroms. Its leaders envisioned a practical programme of auto-emancipation with Jewish communities financing small-scale emigration of their co-religionists to Palestine.¹⁶⁶ Caine addressed a meeting of the London branch in which he spoke of his Russian visit, yet again referring to the 'terrible sufferings' of the Jewish women and children. Dr Hirsch, the secretary of Chovevei Zion, praised Caine's lecture:

It was a little 'oasis' in the great desert of Jew-baiting and Jew hating to find a man of his [Caine's] position and attainments feeling so deeply for their people and ready to do so much to obtain a true vision of their condition.¹⁶⁷

Caine stated during an interview that he was 'constantly' receiving letters from all parts of Europe written by members of Chovevei Zion, and he made specific reference to the Vienna branch which had urged him to 'throw himself into a scheme for the colonisation of Palestine'.¹⁶⁸ Caine expressed confidence that the group had the potential to become 'a gigantic organisation', and set out his own plans for a visit to Palestine since he wished to assess the country's suitability for Jewish settlement at first hand. Caine felt that if he urged 'poor Jews' to participate in any colonisation scheme which ended in disaster, he would personally be 'greatly distressed',¹⁶⁹ but nothing further was heard regarding this proposed visit.

¹⁶⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 21 June 1925,

¹⁶⁵ Allen, p.209.

¹⁶⁶ Udelson, p.153.

¹⁶⁷ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 23 December 1892.

¹⁶⁸ *The Young Man*, November 1893.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Zangwill, however, strongly opposed plans for such small scale ‘piecemeal, practical settlement’, which he dismissed as ineffectual, a ‘pathetic’ dream.¹⁷⁰ In *The Children of the Ghetto* (1892) he portrays Chovevei Zion contemptuously as the Holy Land League, deprecating its members as querulous and petty with their ‘futile methods and ignorant utopianism’.¹⁷¹ Zangwill himself favoured stronger and more concerted action on the establishment of a homeland which would offer a refuge for those Jews fleeing persecution, if necessary on an internationally sanctioned area of territory outside Palestine. He believed that this should be effected as a matter of urgency given the increasing incidence of pogroms in Russia. Zangwill also hoped that the creation of a homeland in which Jews constituted the majority population would preserve their religious and cultural identity, which he feared would eventually disappear if Eastern Europeans who had emigrated westwards followed the path of assimilation favoured by emancipated second or third generation Jews already settled in nations such as Britain and the United States.¹⁷² On the other hand, as was the case with his plans for Christian Socialist government, Caine lacked a defined vision of his aims and objectives in supporting the Zionist cause, taking the view that the establishment of a safe haven for East European Jews was necessary at almost any cost.

By the early 1900s, Caine lent support to Zangwill’s efforts to assess the potential for large scale Jewish colonisation of the Palestine region. Zangwill requested Caine’s participation in a debate organised at the Article Club, a forum for discussions on current political and economic issues.¹⁷³ The debate took place on 20 November 1901 and had three main objectives. These were to increase general awareness of Palestine’s economic opportunities, to suggest ways in which the country could be developed, and to examine the implications for Jewish settlement.¹⁷⁴ With

¹⁷⁰ Udelson, p.97.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Udelson, p.163.

¹⁷³ Letter to Caine from Israel Zangwill, dated 23 October 1901, Hall Caine Papers, Box 52.

¹⁷⁴ David Glover, ‘Imperial Zion: Israel Zangwill and the English’ in *The Jew in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa*, ed. by Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.131-43 (pp.135-36).

this purpose in mind, Zangwill assembled, as David Glover describes it, ‘a remarkable collection of sympathetic and interested parties’; experienced colonial administrators, members of the Jewish community and several well-known authors (including the playwrights George Sims and George Bernard Shaw).¹⁷⁵ In his contribution, Caine considered the potential economic future of Palestine in the event of its becoming a Jewish homeland, and took an optimistic stance, believing that its geographical position: ‘[...] between the Eastern and Western worlds may yet give Palestine great commercial possibilities as a sort of world’s clearing house’. He envisioned Palestine as:

[...] a Jewish Commonwealth, protected by all the powers, but and perhaps also partly controlled by them. And if this is not the millennium the Jewish people have looked for and prayed for, it may be a step in that general progress of the world which is binding all parts and all peoples together.¹⁷⁶

Over time, Zangwill was to become increasingly disillusioned with the lack of progress in resettling Russian and Polish Jews. He maintained that the trustees of the Jewish Colonisation Association, established in 1891 by the wealthy philanthropist Baron von Hirsch, were using the Baron’s legacy unwisely on impractical settlement programmes such as the relocation of Jewish refugees to Argentina. Zangwill hoped to ‘convert’ Caine to his ‘new point about the present waste of the Hirsch millions in unprofitable experiments’.¹⁷⁷ He specifically identified the Argentinian scheme as a failure, and complained that Moiseville [the project’s flagship settlement], ‘the one Jewish colony that they [the Jewish Colonial Association] boast of as a success, has this year had no crop at all’.¹⁷⁸ No record of Caine’s response to this has come to light.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Draft of Caine’s after-dinner speech delivered at the Article Club, London, on 20 November 1901, Hall Caine Papers, Box 34.

¹⁷⁷ Letter to Caine from Israel Zangwill, dated 2 February 1902, Hall Caine Papers, Woodson Research Centre, Rice University, Texas.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Zangwill to Caine, dated 24 February 1902, Hall Caine Papers, Woodson Research Centre, Rice University, Texas.

However, in 1906 Caine did respond to Zangwill's request for opinions from a cross-section of British and European literary and political figures including J. M. Barrie, Jerome K. Jerome, and Thomas Hardy, concerning the possibility of a British grant of land in East Africa for Jewish settlement, in which Jews would enjoy a measure of autonomy under British protection.¹⁷⁹ Zangwill believed that any such offer should be accepted as 'a pragmatic response to an urgent necessity, the rescue of persecuted Russian Jewry'.¹⁸⁰ The collection of views was published in the *Fortnightly Review*. Caine's brief contribution implied criticism of those affluent, long established British Jews who did not welcome the influx of their Yiddish speaking, strictly Orthodox, co-religionists:

At the earliest moment I shall send you the message you wish for about your colonisation scheme. I sympathise with you sincerely and your difficulties with the rich men of your people, who find London the best Jerusalem, but do not particularly desire that their poor Russian brethren should share it. It is very fine of you to give all this time and work to so good a cause, and if you do not get material advantage, you get something much better.¹⁸¹

Once again, such a contradiction is typical of Caine's tangled thinking and his tendency to support the disadvantaged outsider. Whilst, as we have seen, he often criticises Jewish failure to integrate into the wider society in which they settled, in this case, he defends the rights of non-assimilated, newly arrived Jews against those within the established Judeo-British community who would deny them entry to Britain on the grounds of their 'otherness'.

Following this it was not until the 1920s, in the aftermath of the Great War, that more detail emerges concerning Caine's support for the Zionist cause. By that time, Caine and Zangwill's views concerning the British Mandate in Palestine differed significantly. Zangwill was bitterly critical. By 1920 he realised that Balfour's

¹⁷⁹ Rochelson, pp.159-60.

¹⁸⁰ Udelson, pp.180-81.

¹⁸¹ Israel Zangwill, 'Letters to the I.T.O', *Fortnightly Review*, April 1906, pp.633-47 (p. 635).

reference to a 'national home' in Palestine was not to be interpreted as a Jewish state, nor were the majority Arab population to be relocated.¹⁸² Zangwill claimed that Palestine was effectively a British possession, whose reconstruction had been brought about by 'Jewish capital and energy':¹⁸³

For the "Jewish National Home" in Palestine is at this moment as little Jewish or National or a Home as any other part of the Diaspora, to which Palestine has now been added.¹⁸⁴

Zangwill's views regarding the British Mandate were supported by sections of the Jewish press. The *Jewish World* was sceptical as to whether it would result in a Jewish nation:

How is it going to emancipate Jewry from its homelessness, from Jews being a people without a land? [...] Why should it be particularly placed upon the shoulders of Jews to redeem for others mainly and themselves incidentally from the waste of ages induced largely by the world's hatred and despite of the Jew, the country which all other peoples have neglected, and the Jew alone has treasured as a precious tradition?¹⁸⁵

Caine viewed the British Mandate as a positive development. In 1925, he visited Palestine with his friend and physician, Robert Marshall. Both were guests of Sir Herbert Samuels, the British High Commissioner, staying at Government House in Jerusalem. The main purpose of the visit was to carry out research for Caine's *Life of Christ*, but Caine also produced a series of newspaper articles describing what he considered to be the beneficial effects of the British Mandate. In two articles for *The Daily Graphic* entitled 'Jerusalem: Old and New' Caine contrasted conditions and life in the city before and after the advent of British rule. He recalled his visit to Russia in the 1890s and the growth of his interest in the establishment of a 'National Home for

¹⁸² Udelson, pp.188-90.

¹⁸³ Zangwill's 'Watchman, What of the Night' speech, delivered to the American Jewish Congress, New York, 14 October 1923, cited in Udelson, p.216.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *The Jewish World*, 2 July 1925.

the Jews', and described his disillusionment with his first visit to Palestine when Jerusalem was: '[...] A rather mean little Asiatic town [. . .] with scarcely a building which from the architectural point seemed worthy of consideration'.¹⁸⁶ Obviously, he believed that considerable improvements in housing stock and infrastructure had taken place since the implementation of the Mandate.

Caine's support for a Jewish homeland which would preserve the cultural and religious identity of the Jews appears to be at odds with his belief in the brotherhood of mankind and the breaking down of national frontiers and barriers. Caine stated that he 'was not a great believer in the doctrines of race' despite the arguments advanced for it, and he felt that racial differences could be ascribed to differences 'of conditions, of climate, of food and above all of government':

I look forward to a time in the progress of humanity when we will not ask if anyone is a Jew or a Gentile, but only if he is a man.¹⁸⁷

Caine justified his support for a Jewish homeland on the grounds both of sentiment and a sense of duty. It should not be forgotten that he had been greatly moved by the suffering of the Russian Jews, and understood 'the deep and age long desire of the Jews to return to the Holy Land'. Ever the pragmatist, he recognised the material benefits of Jewish settlement to Palestine in terms of improved infrastructure and agricultural production.¹⁸⁸ Caine also acknowledged that 'the great and unforgettable services of Jews to the Allied cause during the war'. In recognition of this:

It was the express wish of the British government that [the Jews] a historic race should no longer be a people entirely without a country, to be badgered about from pillar to post in the future as they had been in the past, without any real security in many countries of possessions or habitations or even of life itself, but that in view of their sublime and age-long expectations there should

¹⁸⁶ *The Daily Graphic*, 25 June 1925.

¹⁸⁷ Draft of a speech delivered to the Article Club, Hall Caine Papers, Box 34.

¹⁸⁸ *The Sunday Times*, 20, 28 June 1925; *The Daily Graphic*, 25, 29 June 1925.

henceforth be one country, and that most nearly related to their ancient history and religion, in which they should at least have a recognised abiding place, a permanent home, from which no other race should be able to eject them as long as the British Empire held control.¹⁸⁹

Caine was also able to look beyond the importance of Palestine as a purely Jewish homeland and stress its wider significance as ‘the moral pulse of the world’, a ‘little country which is linked through thousands of years with the most sacred associations of mankind’ due to its association with three great world religions.¹⁹⁰ Caine believed that a nation:

Which had its hand on that pulse of the world, the Holy Land, the cradle of all Christian churches, is in the best position to preserve the world’s peace, for of nothing am I more sure than that against the united voice of the world’s religions no world war can ever be waged.

Caine concluded that the nation with its ‘hand on that pulse’ should be Britain.¹⁹¹ His hopes for Palestine may have proved over-optimistic and unfounded but, unlike Zangwill, he was not troubled by colonial issues, and there is no evidence that he shared Zangwill’s anxieties regarding the loss of Jewish religious and cultural identity as a result of assimilation into the predominantly Christian societies of Western Europe. It was sufficient for him that the Jews had a refuge from religious persecution, and a reward for their support of the Allied cause.

Conclusion

In *The Scapegoat*, Caine presented his readership with a Jewish hero, an unusual type in fin de siècle fiction. However, Israel is neither a paragon of Jewish virtue, nor a caricature of Jewish villainy. Indeed, it must also be remembered that Caine has

¹⁸⁹ *The Sunday Times*, 6 April 1930.

¹⁹⁰ *The Sunday Times*, 28 June 1925.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

demonstrated the interplay between Judaism and Christianity by taking the narrative of Mary Magdalen and converting it into a Jewish one.

Published against a background of growing anti-Semitism it showed, and was seen to show, a step forward in the treatment of Judaic religious and political questions in fiction, and was warmly received by the Jewish community. Caine had provided a well-researched portrayal of Jewish life and anti-Semitism in Morocco during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His visit to Russia on behalf of the Russo-Jewish committee extended his sympathy for, and engagement with, the wider Jewish community in Britain, with whom he maintained a friendly relationship and ultimately he lent support to the Zionist cause.

Caine's attitude towards Judaism is somewhat more complicated than the description of Israel as 'a heroic Jew' might suggest. During the novel, Israel's religious, cultural and racial identity which was initially strongly asserted, loses its definition as Israel embraces the teachings of Mohammed of Mequinez, producing a blend of the three Abrahamic religions. Preservation of a 'separate' Jewish religious and racial identity were not as important to Caine. He justified his sympathy for the Jews and support for a Jewish homeland on sentimental grounds and later as a mark of gratitude for Jewish support for the war effort. In reality, Caine favoured some degree of assimilation and stressed the positive aspects of this, both in practical terms with, for example, greater educational opportunities for the Russian Jews, and the moral benefits of discarding an exclusive rigid dogmatism for a wider, more inclusive belief system in which common humanity was more important than the Jewish identity. As Caine said in his speech at the Article Club, he looked forward to a time when an individual would not be described as a Jew or a Gentile, but as a human being – and yet he simultaneously argued for the value of religiously specific Jewish belief and Jewish culture. It was a tension which he was to develop still further in *The White Prophet*.

Chapter Five

Islam and Empire: Controversy and Commercial Failure

Religion and Politics in *The White Prophet*

Caine's 1909 novel *The White Prophet* is one of several books published during the 1890s and 1900s which are set in British-controlled Egypt and the Sudan, against a background of unrest resulting from the growth of national, political and religious tensions. Many of these novels seek to justify the British presence in both countries as a stabilising and civilising force, and stress the perceived benefits of European influence on their Arab and, significantly, their Muslim inhabitants.¹ As is well-known, the death of General Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 was an event which quickly imprinted the region on the national psyche. Most novelists who were writing against this background paid little or no attention to the theology of the Islamic faith. Thanks in no small part to the death of Gordon, all too often Islam was identified with anti-British fanaticism, as is the case in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898)² and Douglas Sladen's 1909 novel *The Tragedy of the Pyramids*.³

However, in *The White Prophet*, Caine attempted a rather more careful and balanced scrutiny of Islam, considering what it truly signified to Muslims within the political context of British-controlled Egypt and the Sudan during the final years of Lord Cromer's tenure as Consul-General of Egypt. Caine also returned to issues considered in his earlier novels; namely, the failings of organised religion, the common ground shared by the Abrahamic religions, and the way holy men are accredited with divinity. Despite being carefully researched, it was his least successful and most controversial novel, principally because it was perceived as reflecting an overly sympathetic attitude both towards Islam and towards Egyptian nationalism. Caine himself said that *The White Prophet* had been 'on hand for seventeen years, for it is as long ago as the period when I wrote my book called *The Scapegoat*' and '[o]ff and on at various times since, in the midst of other occupations I have taken a turn at the subject of this book'.⁴

¹ Michael Diamond, *Lesser Breeds: Racial Attitudes in Popular British Culture, 1890-1914* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), p.62.

² Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, 1898; (Richmond, Surrey: One World Classics, 2011).

³ Douglas Sladen, *The Tragedy of the Pyramids* (London: Hurst and Blackett Limited, 1909).

⁴ WIWTWP; *Manchester City News*, 11 September 1909.

Caine's interest in Islam first manifested in his intention to write a play based on the life of the Prophet in the late 1880s, with his friend Henry Irving cast in the central role.⁵ The play, and the disquiet it aroused, together with Caine's relationship with Irving is the subject of recent research by Kristen Tetans.⁶ Caine's play, entitled simply *Mahomet*, was inspired by a translation of a play on the same subject by the French dramatist Henri de Bornier. De Bornier's play had proved controversial, described by Tetans as 'a duel between Islam and Christianity, with Christianity triumphant at the end'.⁷ Caine possessed a copy of this play, translated from the French by Florence Stoker.⁸ The play shows Ayesha, Mohammed's best loved wife, conducting an affair with one of her husband's followers, and ends with his suicide which releases Ayesha to marry her lover. Even more shocking was Mohammed's admission that Jesus might have been 'more than a man'.⁹ After the intervention of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, the French Government halted the play's production by the *Comedie-Francaise* in April 1890.¹⁰

Caine's *Mahomet* was completed by January 1890 and the content differed significantly from De Bornier's work.¹¹ Caine sets his play against the background of the *Hirja*, Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. The three central characters are the Prophet Mohammed, a young Jewess Rachel, and her lover Omar, who has converted to Islam. Rachel wrongly suspects Mohammed of having killed her father and, after her own conversion, marries him with the aim of gaining revenge. When Rachel learns of Mohammed's plans to return to Mecca and convert the city to Islam, she persuades him to lead his followers into the city. However, she has secretly written to the Meccan authorities warning them of the impending attack. In the event Omar takes Mohammed's place and Rachel's betrayal is exposed. Convinced that there is an adulterous relationship between the pair, Mohammed decides to kill Omar upon his return. However, the play ends more positively than might be anticipated, as Mohammed's forces are allowed to enter Mecca peacefully. Mohammed and Omar

⁵ Kristen Tetans, 'The Lyceum and the Lord Chancellor: The Case of Hall Caine's *Mahomet*', in *Henry Irving: A Re-Evaluation of the Pre-Eminent Victorian Actor-Manager*, ed. by Richard Foulkes (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp.49-63.

⁶ Tetans, p.51.

⁷ Tetans, p.53.

⁸ Tetans, p.55; English translation of Du Bornier's *Mahomet*, Hall Caine Papers, Box 4.

⁹ English Translation of Du Bornier's *Mahomet*, Hall Caine Papers, Box 4.

¹⁰ Tetans, p.53.

¹¹ Tetans, p.52.

are reconciled and Rachel, who realises that she loves Mohammed after all, is forgiven.¹²

Following significant protests, the British Lord Chamberlain intervened to prevent production of Caine's play in the United Kingdom, on the grounds that any play dealing with the founder of Islam would offend Queen Victoria's Muslim subjects.¹³ Licences were refused for plays with scriptural subjects – the rules were well known and dramatists regulated themselves.¹⁴ Leading figures from Britain's small Muslim community were at the forefront of the protests. Rafiuddin Ahmad, Vice President of the Liverpool Muslim Association, objected to the 'proposed mockery' of the Prophet, which would offend millions of Her Majesty's Muslim subjects, and he expressed hope that the matter would be resolved to the satisfaction of his co-religionists.¹⁵ The British press was also generally hostile to the staging of the play. The *Daily Telegraph* argued that:

The representation of a revealed prophet is directly forbidden by the Koran, and his introduction on the stage would be regarded as blasphemy [...] his followers have a right to object to any travesty upon the stage of his person, his character, his career.¹⁶

The *Leicester Daily Post* called for Caine to reconsider his play; 'The figure of the Prophet is to millions of Mohammedans almost what the Divine person of Christ is to ourselves'.¹⁷ Caine did receive some support in his bid to stage *Mahomet*; admittedly from his boyhood friend, the journalist Robert Leighton, who wrote to the *Telegraph* pointing out that most English people still believed Mohammed to have been an imposter, and that Caine's play might help to rectify this 'generally accepted opinion of the Prophet and of Islamism'.¹⁸

Caine expressed the reasons for his bitter disappointment with the Lord Chamberlain's decision in a lengthy article in *The Speaker*. He complained of the

¹² Tetans, p.56; Manuscript of Caine's *Mohammed*, Hall Caine Papers, Box 4.

¹³ Tetans, p.59.

¹⁴ Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.31-32.

¹⁵ *The Times*, 26 September 1890.

¹⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1890.

¹⁷ *Leicester Daily Post*, 18 November 1890.

¹⁸ Letter from Robert Leighton, dated October 1890, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1890.

Muslim reaction to his play, and argued that spectacles such as the Passion play at Oberammergau had not ‘excited the pious indignation of Christians’, but had ‘done something towards deepening the religious sentiment of Europe’.¹⁹ Dramatic art, and by implication fictional art, could assist religious experience: ‘Christianity has recognised what Islam has never seen – that art may be a help towards spiritual life and that the divinity of its Founder is not obscured, but vivified by the truthful representation of His humanity’.²⁰ Caine also defended De Bornier’s *Mahomet*, describing it as a ‘beautiful poem’, although he did accept that it was ‘false to history, untrue to [Mohammed’s] character and Western in thought’. Nevertheless, Caine believed that the play had injured no-one except De Bornier himself and that the French people had every right to see it performed.²¹ Caine concluded the *Speaker* article with the following comment:

And if fifty millions [sic] of Indian Mussulmans who are said to be ‘irritated at the mockery of their Prophet on the stage’ claim for the mere human incidents of the flight [*Hirja*] and return a sanctity that no dramatist may violate, they are not to be pampered in their religious sensibilities, but to be reasoned out of it as a morbid and unnatural thing which the Prophet’s first Caliph would have condemned as false worship of man and dishonour to God.²²

Caine asserted that Mohammed ‘had no claim to divinity’, and that he was simply ‘the mouthpiece of God’. He turned to the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, an authority within Islam and the father-in-law of the Prophet, to support this view, citing events immediately after Mohammed’s death when his followers gathered together. One individual refused to believe that the Prophet was dead and, drawing his sword, threatened to cut down any man who said that this was the case. Abu Bakr stepped forward, saying:

Peace, Peace. Let him know, whosoever worshippeth Mohammed, that he is dead, but whoso worshippeth God, let him know that the Lord liveth and does not die.²³

¹⁹ ‘Literary Casuistry’, *The Speaker*, 4 October 1890.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ ‘Literary Casuistry’ *The Speaker*, 4 October 1890.

²² Ibid.

²³ ‘Literary Casuistry’ *The Speaker*, 4 October 1890.

However, far from drawing a line under this episode, Caine's *Speaker* article perhaps unsurprisingly further inflamed the situation. Abdullah Quilliam, the President of the Liverpool Moslem Congregation, claimed that although Mohammed was 'only a man', he was also the 'inspired Prophet of God' and his actions ought not to be 'travestied or burlesqued' on the stage.²⁴ Abdullah Quilliam, known as William Henry Quilliam prior to his conversion, was of Manx descent and, like Caine, had been brought up in Liverpool. In his biography of Quilliam, Ron Geaves describes his conversion to Islam after a stay in Morocco when recovering from illness, and his subsequent establishment of the Liverpool Muslim Institute in 1887. Although the congregation included those born into the faith (mainly sailors from the Indian sub-continent), most were British-born former Christians.²⁵ Despite some local opposition, which including attacks on the building by locals and disruption of lectures by members of a nearby Baptist church, the Institute thrived until Quilliam left Britain in 1907, after which it suffered a decline in membership and influence.²⁶ Quilliam had evidently read many of Caine's novels. Indeed, in the correspondence cited above, he described his exceeding regret at having to 'take sides against Mr Hall Caine, whose literary works I have perused with the greatest pleasure, and in whose rising fame in the literary world, as a fellow Manxman, I have felt justifiable pride'.²⁷

Geaves believes that, given the similarity between their backgrounds, it was likely that Caine and Quilliam would have known each other, but that any connection would have been severed after 1890 due to their differences regarding *Mahomet*. Caine's brother, William, was a friend of Quilliam.²⁸ However, no evidence has yet come to light, either within the Manx Museum archive or elsewhere, which shows a more direct connection, let alone a meeting, between the two. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating glimpse of a Manx-raised Liverpool based Muslim commenting on Caine – and by implication Quilliam was at ease with Caine's novels and his general stance on religion when applied to Christianity and Judaism, but felt compelled to complain

²⁴ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 10 October 1890.

²⁵ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam* (Markfield, Leicestershire: Kube Press), pp.59-95.

²⁶ Geaves, pp.66-67.

²⁷ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 10 October 1890.

²⁸ Geaves, p.69.

when Caine attempted a dramatic representation of the Prophet (likely because of the specific prohibition on representation within the Islamic faith).

Caine quickly recovered from this setback to find other uses for his play. He changed the name of *Mahomet* to *The Prophet* and sold it to the American actor E.S. Willard for production in the United States, although there is no evidence that it was ever staged.²⁹ He also wrote a novella, the plot of which is identical to that of the play. This was *The Mahdi: A Story of Love and Race*, which Caine subtitled ‘A Drama in Story’, as if to emphasise connection with his play. *The Mahdi* appeared in the Christmas issue of *The Christian World* in December 1894.³⁰

Several elements in the plot of *The White Prophet* were based on this novella. In both works the central female characters suspect the wrong man of murdering their father, fake affection for him, and betray him to the authorities using their servant boy as a messenger. The novel features five main characters. Lord Nuneham, the British Consul-General, is an authoritarian figure closely modelled on Lord Cromer, the Consul-General of Egypt from 1883 until 1907. (Figure 12) His son, Charles Gordon Lord, is a much-decorated young soldier, whose character is obviously and very unsubtly based on General Gordon. General Graves is the Commander-in-chief of the British forces, his daughter Helena, is Gordon’s fiancée, and finally Ishmael Ameer, the White Prophet of the title, who is a religious leader and reformer.

The views of Lord Nuneham and Gordon regarding British rule are in conflict from the outset. The former regards the Egyptians as an inferior subject people who need firm, autocratic government, whilst the latter believes that they should be ruled by love and with respect for their religion. The novel opens with expressions of Egyptian discontent with British rule following a re-enactment of the Battle of Omdurman (1898), when the forces of the Mahdi suffered heavy casualties during their defeat by the British army. Nuneham is convinced that a young preacher, Ishmael Ameer, is inciting the native population to sedition. He is wrongly identified as ‘another Mahdi’ – however, Ishmael is in fact seeking to reform Islam by purging what he sees as the corruption and materialism within it. Nuneham decides to close the

²⁹ Tetans, p.61.

³⁰ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Mahdi: A Story of Love and Race*, in *The Christian World*, Christmas issue, December 1894, pp.3-22.

Muslim University of El Azhar, in his view a 'hotbed of sedition', where Ishmael was to have preached. After meeting the Ulema, the University's governing body, Gordon discovers that Ishmael is in fact a religious reformer with no political ambitions, and therefore it would be morally indefensible for the British authorities to close the university. Accordingly, he refuses to obey his general's orders to oversee the closure, fearing violence, loss of life, and damage to Britain's reputation and prestige throughout the world. Gordon's insubordination results in him being stripped of his rank and decorations by General Graves, his commanding officer and the father of his fiancée, Helena. Gordon is vindicated when the closure results in a riot. The students throw missiles at the soldiers who respond with indiscriminate fire, resulting in the death of a young boy and several hundred students. Gordon is present at the riot and attacks the officer, Colonel McDonald, who gives the order to fire, thus clearly perpetuating the cult of individualism which attached to Gordon of Khartoum. Indeed, Caine admitted that he was using this incident to study the character of a soldier 'like General Gordon'. On the one hand military discipline requires that he obey orders, but on the other 'an overwhelming moral sense' tells him that he cannot obey 'without outraging the highest dictates of his conscience,' and that to remain 'a good man' he must become 'a bad soldier'.³¹ Caine directly and repeatedly stresses the parallels between his character and Gordon within the novel, emphasising the fact that both are men of principle – the Sirdar of the Sudan, for example, reflecting on Gordon Lord's conduct, decides that Gordon 'had done no more and no less than his great namesake did before him when he resisted authority because authority was in the wrong!'³²

Caine evidently supported the demands of conscience, although this further breach of discipline leaves Gordon facing a court martial and a possible death sentence. Moreover, his engagement to Helena is broken off at the insistence of her father, General Graves. The General suffers a fatal heart attack after a violent confrontation with Gordon who then flees to the Sudan, with the help of Arab friends, to join Ishmael and his supporters. Helena mistakenly believes that Ishmael, who had also been interviewed by General Graves, is responsible for her father's death. She too travels to the Sudan but with very different motives, posing as an Indian princess who wishes to support Ishmael's reforming work. In fact, Helena intends to betray him to

³¹ WIWTWP, p.9.

³² TWP, p.345 (Vol. I, Third Book, Chapter V).

the British authorities at the earliest opportunity and gain revenge for her father's death. Ishmael marries her both to offer protection and safeguard her reputation, and initially agrees not to consummate the marriage, although this changes later when he falls in love with her.

At first, Ishmael preaches against materialism and stresses the need to purify and regenerate Islam, purging it of corrupt practices such as slavery, superstition, indiscriminate divorce and polygamy. However, in a parallel with John Storm in *The Christian*, he is flattered by the devotion of his followers, and begins to believe that he has supernatural attributes. After becoming convinced that he has a divinely appointed mission to announce the imminent coming of the Mahdi, the 'Expected One', Ishmael plans a peaceful pilgrimage to Cairo, accompanied by some ten thousand of his followers. He intends to persuade the Egyptian army to lay down its weapons and withdraw their support from the British authorities, thus bringing a peaceful end to the British occupation. In his mind, the subsequent appearance of the Mahdi will see the establishment of a Caliphate, a union of all Muslim nations with Egypt at its centre. Helena encourages Ishmael's plans but also informs the British authorities in the knowledge that he will certainly be apprehended and imprisoned, perhaps even executed.

Aware that Ishmael's capture and possible execution by the British will result in violence, Gordon travels to Cairo in his place, disguised as a Bedouin sheikh. He successfully averts a confrontation between the pilgrims and the British, but his identity is discovered and he is arrested, court-martialled and sentenced to death. However, somewhat implausibly, Gordon receives a Royal pardon and is appointed Major-General of the British forces in Egypt. Whilst this outcome can be interpreted as bolstering the myth of General Gordon, Caine was effectively 'rewarding' Gordon for obeying his conscience, and his appointment also proves beneficial for the Egyptian population as he discharges his duties with sympathy and understanding. After divorcing Helena, Ishmael retreats into the desert and nothing further is heard of him, but he is revered by the Egyptian and Sudanese people as a great religious leader.

The White Prophet was not a commercial success. *The Spectator* delivered a scathing analysis, with particular emphasis on Caine's perceived sympathy with Egyptian nationalism. The review claimed that he had perpetrated 'the most

mischievous and odious travesty of our policy in Egypt' and had exploited his popularity 'with a half educated public to inflame sedition and defame his country'.³³ As ever, the novel's melodramatic plot was criticised. As *The Daily Chronicle* put it:

The *White Prophet* is fully as sensational and startling as anything perpetrated by its author in a fairly purple past [...] One finds oneself saying on every other page; 'I don't believe it!'.³⁴

The novel was translated into seven languages, including Arabic, and even serialised after translation in the Arabic newspaper *Al Moayad*, with Caine receiving £14,000 for the serialisation rights.³⁵ However, Caine's publisher, William Heinemann, refused to sanction a second edition due to the political and religious controversies the novel provoked, and it was out of print by 1920, when Heinemann was preparing a Collected Edition of Caine's novels.³⁶ Caine's acquaintance, Samuel Norris, claimed that the book sold so badly that Caine bought the unsold copies to avoid them being offered as 'Remainders', 'thus saving himself from the greatest humiliation that any author can endure'.³⁷

Douglas Sladen entered the controversy surrounding the novel when he revealed that after reading just two instalments of *The White Prophet* in the *Illustrated London News*, he was inspired to produce his own 'counterblast' – 'to combat the attacks made by [Caine] on the British army and British administration in Egypt'.³⁸ His objections highlight the political issues raised in the novel. Sladen took particular issue with Caine's playing down of the benefits of British rule in Egypt and to perceived inaccuracies in his depictions of army life and military protocol – he dismissed as 'impossible' Gordon's pardon and subsequent elevation to General.³⁹

Dramatization of *The White Prophet* also proved problematic due to its controversial political content, and the play was never performed before an audience. Caine's younger son, Derwent Hall Caine, conducted a copyright performance at the Garrick Theatre in London in November 1908, and it was also reported that the actor,

³³ *The Spectator*, 14 August 1909.

³⁴ *The Daily Chronicle*, 12 August 1909.

³⁵ *Egyptian Gazette*, 1 July 1901.

³⁶ Waller, p.738.

³⁷ Norris, p.66.

³⁸ *Manchester Courier*, 17 August 1909.

³⁹ *TTOTP*, Preface, xx-xxi.

Beerbohm Tree, was to produce the play at His Majesty's Theatre.⁴⁰ However, Tree withdrew from the planned production 'from fear of the shadow of the Censor'.⁴¹ Newspaper reports suggest that Lord Cromer had protested to the Lord Chamberlain's department 'that the state of nationalist agitation in Egypt made a dramatic representation of some of its features injudicious, and Mr. Tree was courteously invited to take an official hint'.⁴² Political, patriotic and religious objections appear to have motivated much of the controversy surrounding both the play and the novel from the view point of the Establishment. For Caine, however, the political and religious aspects of the novel were inextricably linked as his defence of *The White Prophet* shows.

The controversy surrounding *The White Prophet* led to the publication of two booklets justifying its content. Caine produced a 58-page privately published pamphlet 'Why I Wrote *The White Prophet*' which had originally formed the text of an address to the Jewish Literary Society of Liverpool.⁴³ Caine claimed that it was his response to adverse criticism which was not of a 'literary character', but which amounted to 'grave charges of personal misconduct', accusing him of 'defaming [his] country, inflaming sedition, outraging the sanctities of religion, and pandering to the appetite for indecency'.⁴⁴ Caine also provided justification for his views on the nature of Islam and on the relationship between the British and the Egyptians, in addition to outlining the different characters and their motivations. Caine was encouraged to publish the text of the address by B.L. Benas, the Jewish Literary Society's president.⁴⁵

George Bernard Shaw also responded to comments on the novel in 'The Critics of the White Prophet' which was originally intended as the preface to a second edition. Instead it was published in pamphlet form by Heinemann in 1909. Shaw described the novel as 'a romance by an honest man,' and claimed that he had given a fair portrayal of British rule in Egypt.⁴⁶ Shaw set out the shortcomings of British rule which are examined in the novel and supported Caine's sympathetic views of Egyptian

⁴⁰ *Daily Mail*, 28 November 1908.

⁴¹ Waller, p.738.

⁴² *Westminster Gazette*, 2 June 1909.

⁴³ WIWTWP, Opening note to pamphlet, unpaginated..

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Letter to Caine from B.L. Benas, dated 7 September 190, Hall Caine Papers, Box 59.

⁴⁶ George Bernard Shaw, 'The Critics of *The White Prophet*', (1909; London: William Heinemann, n.d.), p.1.

nationalist aspirations and of Islam. The fact that two ‘defences’ of the novel were published by Caine and his friend Shaw highlights the religio-political controversy provoked by *The White Prophet* which certainly polarised opinions regarding whether the views expressed by Caine were overly sympathetic to Egyptian nationalism and Islam, and by implication, anti-British.

Caine’s Egyptian Odyssey

Caine undertook extensive and careful research for *The White Prophet*, making three visits to Egypt.⁴⁷ Again these visits attracted much publicity (Figure 13). On 6 March 1907, he and his wife Mary sailed from Marseilles on an Eastern Mediterranean cruise. After a visit to Jerusalem, they travelled to Egypt and stayed in Cairo.⁴⁸ Early the following year, Caine left London with Mary for a second visit to Egypt and Palestine. They intended to stay for three or four months and divide their time between Cairo and Khartoum. Caine had a contact in Cairo, an Englishman named B. L. Moseley, who sent him a book entitled *The Spirit of Islam* by Syed Ameer Ali to provide background for his research.⁴⁹ Ali was an Indian Muslim judge who promoted cooperation between Hindus and Muslims as a means of advancing the modernisation of India.⁵⁰ Moseley admired Caine’s work and was interested in his project of a novel dealing with Egypt and Islam.⁵¹ During July 1909, he read the proofs of *The White Prophet*, and suggested some slight alterations to the text in the interests of accuracy and authenticity, chiefly in respect of Arabic expressions and military protocol.⁵²

Caine and his wife reached Khartoum by the end of January 1909. On 4 February, they dined with Major General Reginald Wingate, Governor General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, who had served in Egypt and the Sudan. Major Wingate was the author of a book entitled *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan*.⁵³ Wingate undoubtedly provided Caine with a great deal of information about the country, the British occupation, and Mahdism. Caine does not claim to have read the

⁴⁷ *Manchester City News*, 11 September 1909.

⁴⁸ Allen, p.317.

⁴⁹ Allen, p.323.

⁵⁰ *Milli Gazette*, 15 August 2000 at <www.milligazette.com/Archives/15-8-2000/Art19.htm>, accessed 20 October 2016.

⁵¹ Allen, p.322.

⁵² Letter to Caine from B.L. Moseley, dated 23 July 1909, Hall Caine Papers, Box 21.

⁵³ Allen, pp.322-23.

book, but he does state that he began ‘his studies of Mahdism under Sir Reginald Wingate, who knows the origin of that astonishing religious movement’.⁵⁴

During his time in the Sudan, Caine attended a garden party held by members of the British community in Khartoum, which gave him the opportunity to observe first-hand the often-dismissive attitude of the British administration to the native Sudanese and Islamic culture.⁵⁵ Caine, always interested in the figure of the individualist religious outsider, remarked on the way holy men were identified as charlatans to be forcibly dealt with by the British authorities; ‘Whip ‘em all, I say! Only way!’, which caused him to wonder if force was the correct response to such ‘poor and paltry’ manifestations of faith.⁵⁶ After their stay in the Sudan, Caine and Mary travelled up the Nile to Wadi Halfa, Philae and Aswan, as Caine wanted to see the Aswan Dam which had been completed in 1903.⁵⁷

Caine produced a series of eight articles on Egypt and the British Occupation for the *Daily Telegraph*, which appeared between the 5 and the 19 August 1909, coincident with the publication of *The White Prophet*. The first two articles examined the status of women in Islamic countries.⁵⁸ Caine also considered aspects of the British Occupation of Egypt; how it was viewed by the Egyptian people, its effect on their material and moral well-being and the growth of Egyptian nationalism.⁵⁹ More pertinently ‘Christian Government and Eastern Religions’ focuses on British attitudes to Islam in Egypt and questions whether Christian missionaries should attempt conversion of predominantly Muslim populations.⁶⁰ These articles provide a significant insight into Caine’s preparatory research for the novel. He also consulted the liberal Muslim scholar Kasim Amir Bey, an Egyptian court judge who had produced a pamphlet on the status of women in Islam, based on the Koran and the hadiths.⁶¹ Crucially, Caine’s account of that interview also reveals that he studied George Sale’s 1836 translation of the Koran in order that he might better understand

⁵⁴ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

⁵⁵ *The British Weekly*, 12 August 1909; *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Allen, p.323.

⁵⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 4 and 5 August 1909.

⁵⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 and 9 August 1909.

⁶⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1909.

⁶¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 4 and 5 August 1909.

Bey's pamphlet.⁶² He also attended Friday prayers at a mosque,⁶³ and undertook a journey by camel through the desert near Sakkara, where he witnessed celebrations of the Prophet's birthday.⁶⁴

'Phantoms of Fanaticism'⁶⁵ - Islam and British Rule in Egypt

Caine expressed extreme disapproval of the attitude of the British administration towards Islam throughout *The White Prophet*, and criticised the fact that the British made little or no effort to govern according to the spirit of the indigenous civilisation. Any desire to do good was hidden by 'repellent behaviour and chilly superciliousness of being':⁶⁶

Our officials do not go out to Egypt to make their homes there, to love and sympathise with the people among whom they are to live, whose bread they are to eat, and whose affairs they are to control, but to master, not to guide their subjects, and to return 'home' as speedily as they may.⁶⁷

In 1907, when Caine began his research for the novel, Lord Cromer, the autocratic Consul-General of Egypt, had just retired after almost twenty-five years of service. Cromer was wholly unsympathetic both to Islam and Egyptian nationalism.⁶⁸ He disliked 'Muslims, Egyptians, or any Oriental',⁶⁹ and viewed Egyptians as 'irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different",' from the 'rational, virtuous, mature and "normal" European'.⁷⁰ Such opinions found fictional expression in other novels set in Egypt. Sladen, in *The Tragedy of the Pyramids* commented that:

The unanimous verdict of the English whose life work had been in Egypt [was] that the Egyptians were not yet ready for Responsible Government, because responsibility was an unknown virtue in the true Egyptian.⁷¹

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1909.

⁶⁴ WIWTWP, pp.45-46.

⁶⁵ TWP, Vol. I, p.33 (First Book, Chapter IV).

⁶⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1909.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p.469.

⁶⁹ Daniels, p.470.

⁷⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2003), p.40.

⁷¹ TTOTP, p.21.

Any degree of self-determination was therefore out of the question, and Cromer construed attempts by the Egyptians to cast off British rule or attain more autonomy as ‘Pan-Islamic fanaticism’ which had to be firmly crushed.⁷² Caine believed that Lord Cromer was ‘deceived by the pursuit of a gigantic phantom – the phantom of a vast Islamic or Arab conspiracy against the Western nations’ in his dealings with the Egyptians.⁷³

Ironically, Caine describes his character, Lord Nuneham, with ‘five thousand British bayonets to impose his will’⁷⁴ as:

A great English statesman – who stood for the principle that the way to rule alien races is to repress by force their attempts to rule themselves.⁷⁵

The alienation of the British from the Egyptian population breeds an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust. Nuneham, certain that the two cultures are essentially oppositional, is easily persuaded that minor incidents expressing Egyptian discontent with British rule are part of ‘a vast racial and religious conspiracy’.⁷⁶

The East was the East; the West was the West; Moslem was Moslem; Christian was Christian; Egyptians cared more about Islam than they did about good government, and Europeans in the valley of the Nile, especially British soldiers and officials, were living on the top of a volcano.⁷⁷

Caine regularly based the religious and political tensions between the British and Egyptians within the novel on actual events, which often demonstrated the potential for mutual misunderstanding. One such event was the Denshawai incident, which occurred in a village in the Nile Delta some three years before *The White Prophet* was published. A group of farmers protested at a pigeon shoot by a party of British officials – they regarded the birds as part of their livestock. The British assumed that the protestors at Denshawai were Islamist nationalists. Several of the Egyptians involved in the ensuing violence were hanged, others were flogged or

⁷² G.N. Sanderson, ‘The Nile Basin and the Eastern Horn, 1870-1908’ in *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 6 from c.1870-c.1905*, ed. by Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.592-679 (p.626).

⁷³ *Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 1909.

⁷⁴ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.72 (First Book, Chapter X).

⁷⁵ *WIWTWP*, p.13.

⁷⁶ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.29 (First Book, Chapter IV).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

sentenced to hard labour.⁷⁸ There is a clear, if oblique, reference to Denshawai in *The White Prophet*, as an incident which resulted in five hangings ‘for an offence that had not a particle of religious or political significance’.⁷⁹ However, Nuneham fails to understand this, hence his reaction to Ishmael, when ‘[d]eluded by phantoms of fanaticism’ he decides to take decisive action to ‘smash’ this new prophet, by ordering the closure of El Azhar University (by force if necessary) where Ishmael is to preach.⁸⁰ Facing accusations that the critical attitude he adopted towards the British authorities in Egypt would help to ‘inflame sedition’, Caine claimed that those who knew the country would recognise:

That it would take a hundred White Prophets to do a hundredth part of the mischief against British rule that was done in one day by the blunder of Denshawai.⁸¹

Bernard Shaw agreed with Caine on this point. He described Denshawai as an ‘abomination’ which had only increased support for Egyptian nationalism:

Henceforth, when an Egyptian wavers in his determination to recover Egypt for the Egyptians and drive out the Occupation bag and baggage, the word Denshawai will screw him up to the Nationalist mark like a magic spell.⁸²

Cromer himself was unwilling to accept Islam as a religion of civilisation and claimed that it was a complete failure as part of a social system. He maintained that in Egypt, the British, a civilisation whose spirit was progress, was attempting to reform a civilisation whose spirit was fixity.⁸³ Nuneham sees Islam in similar terms, maintaining that, unlike Christianity, it has failed to accommodate itself to the spirit of the ages but has ‘remained fixed, the religion of the seventh century, born in a desert and suckled in a society that was hardly better than barbarism’:⁸⁴

What does Islam mean? It means slavery, the seclusion of women, indiscriminate divorce, unlimited polygamy, the breakdown of the family and

⁷⁸ Sanderson, p.626.

⁷⁹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.29 (First Book, Chapter IV).

⁸⁰ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.33 (First Book, Chapter IV).

⁸¹ *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 30 November 1909.

⁸² Shaw, p.5.

⁸³ Daniel, p.470.

⁸⁴ *TWP*, Vol. I, pp. 39-40 (First Book, Chapter V).

the destruction of the nation. Well, what happens? Civilisation comes along, and it is death to all such dark ways.⁸⁵

Any display of religious enthusiasm by the Egyptian population was interpreted as an upsurge of militant Islam and consequently a threat to British authority, hence Nuneham's denouncement of Ishmael as a 'fanatical preacher' and a 'new Mahdi', seeking to foment political strife and undermine British authority. Such 'holy men' must be made to realise that:

Even if the onward march of progress is but faintly heard in the vaults of their mosque, civilisation is standing outside the walls with its laws and, if need be, its soldiers.⁸⁶

The Mahdi, Mohammed Ali, and Mahdiism were the greatest challenge to British supremacy in both Egypt and the Sudan at the turn of the century. The title means 'Guided One', or 'Expected Deliverer'. Caine himself stated that his desire to know more about 'this amazing man' had motivated him to visit Khartoum.⁸⁷ This interest in such apocalyptic figures – in this context a figure at the centre of a huge political controversy - is a thread which runs throughout Caine's work and finds expression in characters such as John Storm and Ishmael Ameer. According to Islamic tradition the Mahdi was a figure whose arrival would precede the coming of Jesus Christ and the Last Judgement.⁸⁸ This tradition, when combined with political ambitions and divine pretensions on the part of the Mahdi, had revolutionary implications for British rule. Mahdiism could rally anti-British sentiment and provoke armed rebellion by appealing to the religious sensibilities of Muslim populations under Christian rule.

It is important to emphasise that other contemporary novelists shared the opinions of Cromer and Nuneham. Sladen, for example, in *The Tragedy of the Pyramids* expresses the view that 'The dangerous element in the Egyptian Nationalist movement during the past few years has been Mohammedan fanaticism',⁸⁹ and, later in the novel, the narrative describes the plans of the Egyptian Nationalists to wage 'a

⁸⁵ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.40 (First Book, Chapter V).

⁸⁶ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.42 (First Book, Chapter V).

⁸⁷ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

⁸⁸ Sanderson, pp. 642-43.

⁸⁹ *TTOTP*, xi.

great Mohammedan *jihad* to sweep all the Christians in North Africa into the sea'.⁹⁰ However, in Caine's novel, Gordon Lord, Nuneham's son, acts as a foil to his father demonstrating an entirely different view of Ishmael and Islam. Like Gordon of Khartoum, he fails to follow orders on an issue of principle. A courageous and much decorated soldier who has fought in the Sudan and in South Africa, Gordon Lord loves Egypt and its people.⁹¹ With an Egyptian foster mother and fluent in the Arabic language, in his boyhood, he is described as being 'half a Mohammedan'.⁹² Gordon Lord also overturns the convention which prevented English and Egyptian soldiers mixing. Although 'it was not good form for a British officer to fraternise with the Egyptians', Gordon shakes the hands of the Egyptian soldiers on his return from a tour of duty in South Africa and 'contrary to custom' takes quarters in a barracks on the banks of the Nile with the Egyptians.⁹³

Gordon is instructed to investigate Ishmael's teaching by his father. After interviewing the Chancellor of El Azhar University, Gordon realises that Ishmael is no threat to British rule. Instead, he has much in common with broad-minded Christians who read the Bible by the spirit, not the letter, and reject rigid dogmatic interpretations.⁹⁴ Gordon is told that Ishmael wishes to see the spiritual regeneration of Islam, freeing it from the domination of the Caliphs and Sultans 'whose selfishness and sensuality keep it in bondage to the powers of darkness'.⁹⁵ Gordon agrees with Ishmael's view of Christian civilisation as 'little better than an organised hypocrisy, a lust of empire in nations and a greed of gold in men, destroying liberty, morality and truth' and he believes that if Christ were to return; 'He would not recognise in the civilisation known by His name the true posterity of the little church He founded on the shores of the Lake of Galilee'.⁹⁶

Caine portrays Gordon Lord as a principled individual with a highly-developed sense of justice and conscience. He is shown to understand the importance of Islam to

⁹⁰ *TTOTP*, p.308.

⁹¹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.45 (First Book, Chapter VI).

⁹² *Ibid*.

⁹³ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.49 (First Book, Chapter VI).

⁹⁴ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.57 (First Book, Chapter VII).

⁹⁵ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.58 (First Book, Chapter VII).

⁹⁶ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.59 (First Book, Chapter VII).

its believers, and recognises the lukewarm nature of the Christianity professed by many Britons:

No Christian nation nowadays believes in Christianity as these Moslems believe in Islam. We don't care enough for our faith to die for it. But these dusky millions will die for their religion.⁹⁷

Similar sentiments concerning this difference between Christianity and Islam find fictional expression elsewhere. Arthur Conan Doyle touches on this issue in his 1898 novel, *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, in which a group of Western tourists are kidnapped by violent Muslim tribesmen, who promise to spare their lives if they convert to Islam. The key here is that their refusal to do so is based on racial and cultural concerns, not strong Christian convictions:

All of them were children of this world, and some of them disagreed with everything which that symbol [the cross] upon earth represented. But there was the European pride, the pride of the white race which held them to the faith of their countrymen. It was a sinful, human un-Christian motive, and yet it was about to make them all martyrs to the Christian creed.⁹⁸

This lack of understanding is a major issue examined within *The White Prophet*. Caine believed that the British in general were indifferent Christians, and therefore unable to understand the importance of Islam to Muslims. In his *Telegraph* articles, he wondered:

What an average Oriental must think when he comes to Western countries and finds there is next to no evidence on our streets and in our daily lives that religion is a real force in our lives. Think of Mohammed of say, Assiout, walking from Trafalgar-Square to the top of Ludgate Hill, and seeing several theatres and music halls, about fifty hotels and public houses, and just four churches, closed to worshippers nearly every day of the week and more than half empty on Sunday.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.117 (First Book, Chapter XVII).

⁹⁸ *TTOTK*, p.108 (Chapter 8).

⁹⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1909.

In his interview with Raymond Blathwayt, Caine envisioned a confrontation between ‘a slangy boy fresh from Eton or Harrow’, ‘a young Cockney Board School boy’ and the Mahdi and a supporter:

How could Eton and the Board School appreciate or understand the superb, splendid faith, idealism, fanaticism and longing for the future life of the two followers of Islamism?¹⁰⁰

Lord Nuneham too, is unable to understand such idealism – he is a lifelong agnostic who regards Christianity as ‘no better than a civilising superstition’.¹⁰¹ His views are substantially the same as those held by the British Prime Minister in *The Christian*, who regards it as a ‘harmless superstition’ that the British are a Christian nation,¹⁰² and here and there betray Caine’s deep concern with the problems of a secular state. Nuneham believes that Civilisation, the West and Christianity are synonymous,¹⁰³ but as in *Korosko* this is due to his firm conviction regarding the superiority of European culture and civilization, identified with Christianity, over Eastern cultures, identified with Islam, rather than any religious convictions. He dismisses the notion of Christ’s teachings as a practical guide to life for both individuals and nations:

Is there one man alive who will dare to say that he actually orders his life according to the precepts of Christ? If so, he is either a liar or a fool. As for the nations, look at the facts. Christianity has been two thousand years in the world, yet here we are competing against one another in the building of warships, the imposition of tariffs, the union of trades.¹⁰⁴

Thus, although one of the central characters of *The White Prophet* is a Muslim, Caine returns once again to examine one of the seminal issues of *The Christian*; namely the vast differences between the Christianity preached by Christ and the behaviour of present-day Christians, and the tension between individual religious experience and religious institutions. ‘Why I Wrote the White Prophet’ contains a short section on this subject, entitled ‘The Gulf Between Christ and Christianity’, in which Caine promotes his view that many Christians ‘shuffle off the practical

¹⁰⁰ Raymond Blathwayt, ‘Hall Caine on Egypt’, *Great Thoughts*, 6 November 1909, pp. 88-90 (p.88).

¹⁰¹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.33 (First Book, Chapter IV).

¹⁰² *TC*, p.319 (Third Book, Chapter VI).

¹⁰³ *TWP*, Vol. I, p. 40 (First Book, Chapter V).

¹⁰⁴ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.200 (Fourth Book, Chapter XIII).

application' of the life of Jesus as irrelevant to their lives because Christ lived in 'another country [...] In the midst of another and quite different civilisation'.¹⁰⁵

Caine clearly respected the religiosity of Muslims – and, although he frequently professed an aversion to dogmatism and organised religion with a clerical hierarchy, he was always deeply impressed by manifestations of faith and spirituality, which he thought were common to all belief systems. He was moved by the sight of pilgrims praying in the desert at sunset and commented; 'The thought that millions of other men are at the same hour sending up their great chorus of praise to God is profoundly affecting'.¹⁰⁶ Although Caine respected displays of spirituality and religious passion, he did not question the service to which they were put, an issue he was aware of, but never fully addressed. On this occasion, his view of Muslims at prayer drew the following acerbic comment from *The Christian World*:

There is something refreshingly artless in the admiration of external signs of devotion. In medieval Italy, Mr Hall Caine would doubtless have concluded that the assassins and thieves who prayed before the images of their favourite saint, or took the wafer from the priest's hand before setting out on a night of crime, were among the most devout of men.¹⁰⁷

He drew from this admiration the more controversial idea that the British Occupation was not a force working for the religious well-being of the Egyptians:

I take my stand firmly on the grounds that the welfare of a nation rests, not on its material prosperity, not on its great schemes of irrigation and the development of its natural resources, not on its increase of wealth or even its progress in what we call civilisation, but on its religion.¹⁰⁸

In the novel, Ishmael Ameer speaks for Caine when he preaches that:

The fundamental qualities of national greatness were moral not material; that man does not live by bread alone; that it is of little value to Egypt that her barns are full if the hearts of her children are empty.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ WIWTWP, p.20.

¹⁰⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1909.

¹⁰⁷ *The Christian World*, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ *The British Weekly*, 12 August 1909; *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

¹⁰⁹ TWP Vol. I, p.59 (First Book, Chapter VII).

So, although the British administration had restored Egypt's finances and improved agricultural output by investment in irrigation projects, in Caine's opinion such improvements had taken place at great spiritual expense. Their new prosperity came at the cost of 'uprooting the better part of their humanity and utterly destroying their religion'.¹¹⁰ Participation in the 'mad rush' for wealth, and pursuit of other distractions meant less frequent attendance at the mosque.¹¹¹ Caine recorded his observations of Egyptian peasants, the *fellahin*, who used their increased wages to purchase alcohol in imitation of their British rulers:

It is undoubtedly true that our Western rule has led to a more equitable distribution of property, but it is just as true that the sudden accession of wealth, of what stands for wealth has led to drunkenness among the fellaheen [...] he sees Englishmen drinking, and he knows that lawless Greeks and Italians are setting up shops where bad spirits may be bought cheap.¹¹²

Caine also argued that growing prosperity had increased crime and lawlessness.¹¹³ In *The White Prophet*, he describes Cairo's European Quarter, the *Esbekiah*, as a place where 'the ooze of the gutter of the city is flung up under the public eye', prostitution is rife, and alcohol is freely available.¹¹⁴

Thus, for Caine, the religious disadvantages of the British occupation outweighed the material advantages – prosperity encouraged materialism and sapped the religious energy of the people which resided in Islam. Some reviews took a positive stance on this controversial view. The *Observer* remarked that Caine had studied the Egyptian question closely and had given a 'fairly unbiased presentment of the Nationalist view'.¹¹⁵ The *Daily Sketch* described the novel as a 'bold and brilliant book' which dealt with 'some of the most momentous questions of today. The problem of Egypt under British rule is second only to the problem of India, if not the same'.¹¹⁶ The *Egyptian Gazette* claimed that Caine had 'welded together and harmonised the conflicting problems and ideas of East and West into one solid, substantial and organic

¹¹⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 1909.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 1909.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *TWP*, Vol. I, pp.164-66 (First Book, Chapter XXVIII).

¹¹⁵ *The Observer*, 15 August 1909.

¹¹⁶ *Daily Sketch*, 25 August 1909.

whole'.¹¹⁷ For the most part however, adverse comments were predominant. It was the widely accepted view that the British presence of Egypt must have benefited its population. In the preface to *The Tragedy of the Pyramids*, Sladen stated that 'All the prosperity of Egypt dates from the British Occupation of Egypt',¹¹⁸ and most commentators considered Caine's views to be anti-British. A review in the *Pall Mall Gazette* claimed that:

Carried forward to their logical conclusion [the novel's] views would excuse the casuistry of the worst British agitators and the ingratitude of every native race we have ever brought into the light of peace, government and a standard of justice.¹¹⁹

The Methodist Times expressed similar sentiments regarding Caine's doubts as to the benefits of British occupation:

When Hugh Price Hughes visited Egypt, the sight of a grinning Tommy Atkins leaning out of a barracks window was a sight that the land had passed out of the darkness of tyranny and falsehood into the sacred light of humanity and truth. For the masses of the Egyptian people, the British rule has been as great a deliverance as Moses wrought for the children of Israel. To Mr Hall Caine, as far as we are able to grasp his meaning, the Englishman in Egypt is the central pillar in a temple of Mammon, upholding all that is materialistic, casting a dark shadow upon the spiritual ideals and the upward progress of the people.¹²⁰

Caine himself 'strenuously denied' all accusations that he was 'preaching sedition in Egypt and inciting to rebellion'.¹²¹ In fact, the novel's ending, which shows Egypt securing limited autonomy under British protection, suggests that despite sympathy with the Egyptian people and positive views of Islam, Caine was not totally averse to the Cromerian view. He was able to understand why young, educated Egyptians wanted to participate in the government of their country; 'They naturally

¹¹⁷ *Egyptian Gazette*, 8 May 1909.

¹¹⁸ *TTOTP*, Preface, xi.

¹¹⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 August 1909.

¹²⁰ *The Methodist Times*, 12 August 1909.

¹²¹ *Manchester City News*, 11 September 1909.

object to see the best places in the Government offices filled by foreigners',¹²² but in the novel, he often describes the Egyptian people as simple, volatile and easily manipulated; 'poor Egyptian children'¹²³ and, 'eager emotional Egyptian people', a 'surging mass of Eastern children',¹²⁴ and considered that 'it would be a deplorable mistake to remove the British Occupation from Egypt'.¹²⁵ The fact that Caine's limited sympathy with the Egyptian nationalists' desire to play a greater role in government was considered seditious, anti-British and even subversive, indicates that the accepted view of the Egyptians and other subject races as inferior was deeply entrenched:

The peoples of the East need Governments that can govern. English rule has been upon the whole a cleansing, a healing and a creative influence.¹²⁶

Even Gordon Lord, 'the one officer of English blood who was beloved by the Egyptians',¹²⁷ firmly believed in British supremacy and recognised her responsibilities as a great imperial power. His attempts to avert violence between the British and Egyptians are motivated, not solely by his empathy with the Egyptian people, but also by a desire:

To save England from the loss of her Mohammedan dominions, from being faithless to her duty as a Christian nation, and from the divine judgement which will overtake her if she wantonly destroys her great fame as the one Western power that seems designed by Providence to rule and guide the Eastern peoples.¹²⁸

As already mentioned, the novel's epilogue shows Egypt attaining limited self-government after a difficult transitional period entailing various unspecified 'errors and crimes'. However, Gordon's 'love for the Egyptians never failed him'.¹²⁹ Although he appears to stand in the position of a military autocrat as General of the British army in Egypt, he rules with tact and sympathy, and is 'just as ready to put down lawlessness among Europeans as among Egyptians'.¹³⁰ Gordon's life in Egypt

¹²² Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 6 November 1909, p.89.

¹²³ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.101 (Second Book, Chapter XV).

¹²⁴ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.309 (Fifth Book, Chapter XII).

¹²⁵ Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 6 November 1909, p.90.

¹²⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 20 August 1909.

¹²⁷ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.6 (First Book, Chapter I).

¹²⁸ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.207 (Fourth Book, Chapter XIV).

¹²⁹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.376 (Epilogue).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

‘lessened the gulf which Easterns always find between Christ and Christianity’.¹³¹ Ultimately, Britain never regrets her ‘magnanimous’ decision to grant the Egyptians a share in the government of the country. There is speculation that Ishmael’s dream of a union between Arabs and Turks will be realised with Cairo as its capital.¹³² However, the narrative forecasts that this new Caliphate will have ‘England as its lord and protector’,¹³³ incorporating Caine’s doubts that the people of a subject Eastern nation were able to assume complete responsibility for the effective government of their country. Nevertheless, the apocalyptic tone in which this is couched (‘the divine judgment’), and the references to Providence, indicate that Western rule over Islamic countries is, for Caine, part of the universal order, however great his respect for the religiosity of Islam.

Ishmael Ameer – Traditional Orthodoxy, Religious Unity and Myth.

Caine uses the character of Ishmael Ameer in *The White Prophet* to develop three key religious themes also expressed in earlier novels. These are by now familiar: the failings of organised religion, his theory of the fundamental unity of the three Abrahamic religions, and the way the myth of divinity grows around a particular individual and how this can produce new religious sects or even new belief systems.

The Failings of Organised Religion

Caine had previously touched on the failings of ‘orthodox’ Islam in *The Scapegoat*. When he met the Shereef of Wazan to research the novel, Caine was critical of the Sultan’s lack of religious knowledge; ‘No mind so vacant, no character so weak. The head of Islam cannot read the Koran’.¹³⁴ The Islamic authorities in *The Scapegoat* are the Basha, Ben Aboo, and the Sultan (also a descendant of the Prophet), and each embodies precisely those aspects of Islam of which Caine disapproved. On a visit to Tetuan in celebration of the Prophet’s birthday the Sultan attends the Mosque each day, supposedly to hear the petitions of the poor. However, he is more concerned with dispensing love and fertility charms for payment to finance his extravagancies:

¹³¹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.376 (Epilogue).

¹³² *TWP*, Vol. II, p.378 (Epilogue).

¹³³ *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ ‘Visit to the Shereef of Wazan by Mr Hall Caine’, unnamed and undated periodical, Hall Caine Papers, Scrapbook I (1887-95) p.48.

A greasy smile from the fat Sultan, a scrap of writing to every supplicant, chinking coins dropped into the bag of the attendant from the Treasury, and then up and away. It was a nauseous draught from the bitterest waters of Islam.¹³⁵

Ishmael accepts that both contemporary Christianity and Islam do not measure up to the ideals of their founders; he tells his followers that all religions begin in poverty and end in corruption.¹³⁶ In the case of Christianity this is attributed to materialism and avarice:

Ishmael Ameer sees [...] that what is known to the world as Christian civilisation is little better than an organised hypocrisy, a lust of empire in nations and a greed of gold in men, destroying liberty, morality and truth. Therefore, he warns against a civilisation which comes to the East with religion in one hand and violence and avarice in the other.¹³⁷

However, as might be expected, Ishmael reserves most of his criticism for Islam, which, in his account, began:

With the breaking of idols and went on to the worship of wealth, the quest of power, the lust of conquest – Caliphs seeking to establish their claim not by election and the choice of God, but by theft and murder’.¹³⁸

Subsequently, the ‘selfishness and sensuality’ of the Caliphs and Sultans have kept Islam in bondage to the powers of darkness’.¹³⁹

Caine personally believed Islam was essentially ‘a noble faith’:

I also state, not without close observation, that Islam is a faith that is capable of adapting itself to the highest cravings of the human soul.¹⁴⁰

He did qualify this statement, adding that Islam was only capable of fulfilling such cravings in its purest form. As was often the case he did not fully define these views, but claimed that in Egypt and the Sudan there was a ‘low’ development of Islam, since

¹³⁵ *TS*, p.340 (Chapter XXVI).

¹³⁶ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.105 (Third Book, Chapter XXVI).

¹³⁷ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.59 (First Book, Chapter VII).

¹³⁸ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.105 (Third Book, Chapter XXVI).

¹³⁹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.58 (First Book, Chapter VII).

¹⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

its 'chief judges' had become the 'obsequious servants of the corrupt ruling Sultans'.¹⁴¹ However a 'high' development of genuine religious significance, a potential that Caine detects in expressions of faith visible in Muslim countries but not in Western Christian ones, remains an intensely live possibility for him.

Ishmael's outspoken criticism of a member of the Islamic establishment causes him to lose a prestigious position as reader at the Al Azhar Mosque in Cairo. Ishmael denounces the Grand Cadi, the representative of the Ottoman Sultan in Egypt, and thus expresses Caine's criticisms of all organised, formal religious systems. The Cadi is a combination of 'the Eastern voluptuary and the libertine of the Parisian boulevards' who marks his fourth marriage by a week of celebrations 'in which the days were spent in eating and drinking and the nights in carousing of an unsaintly character,' leading Ishmael to point out that he is flouting the Koran's teachings concerning 'temperance, chastity, and contempt for things of this world'.¹⁴²

Ishmael is determined to purge Islam of things which he perceives as perversions of its original teachings; superstition (magic, sorcery, divination and spells), slavery, polygamy and divorce. Caine devotes most attention to polygamy and divorce, since he very much deplored what he saw as the poor treatment of women in Islam. He had also been critical of polygamy in *The Scapegoat*, written almost twenty years earlier. In that novel's opening chapter, Israel's Jewish father takes a second wife in imitation of Moroccan Muslim practice. Relations between his two wives are strained, which results in the departure of Israel and his mother.¹⁴³ Later, the harem of the Basha is described as 'a hothouse of sickly odours' where the women live a futile, worthless existence:

Having no occupation but that of eating, drinking and sleeping, no education but devising new means of pleasing the lust of their husband's eye, no delight than that of supplanting one another in his love, no passion but jealousy, no diversion but sporting on the roof, no end but death and the Kabar [Sultan's prison].¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *TWP*, Vol. I, p.84-85 (First Book, Chapter XIII).

¹⁴³ *TS*, p.3 (Chapter I).

¹⁴⁴ *TS*, p.303 (Chapter XIII).

Thus, Ishmael is clearly once more speaking for Caine when he maintains that a reassessment of the position of women is vitally important to any reform of Islam. He urges his followers to reject the veiling of women, polygamy and divorce, telling them to '[d]ismiss the madness of a bygone age that woman is inferior to man' because '[m]an's dominion over woman is the product of darkness – put it away'.¹⁴⁵ Ishmael emphasises the implications of polygamy and divorce for women – the 'sorrow and shame' caused by divorce, and the misery experienced by a woman when a new wife is brought into the home.¹⁴⁶ He marries Helena to guard her good reputation, and is initially content for the marriage to remain unconsummated. His violent outburst following Helena's rejection quickly subsides as he acknowledges her love for Gordon and their entitlement to be together, and he consents to divorce from Helena leaving her free to remarry. Although Caine was opposed to the perceived ease of divorce in Islam, it provided him with a convenient plot device to reunite Helena and Gordon.

A recent commentator, Andrew Long, has described Helena as Ishmael's captive and thus dismissed this element of the novel as belonging to a 'subgenre of Orientalist melodrama – soft core erotica akin to the Harlequin romance'.¹⁴⁷ However, this assessment is inaccurate. In fact, Caine's treatment of the relationship between a Muslim man and women (of whatever faith) differs markedly from that of other contemporary novelists, for whom the perceived sensuality of Islam seemed to exercise an unhealthy fascination. For example, in two novels with similar plots by William Le Queux, *Zoraida*¹⁴⁸ and *The Eye of Istar*,¹⁴⁹ a young Englishman who falls in love at first sight with a beautiful Arab woman risks death by entering the harem, whilst in Conan Doyle's *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, the female tourists in the party kidnapped by the Dervishes fear that their lives may only be spared at the risk of a 'fate worse than death' – concubinage in the harem of the Khalifa.¹⁵⁰

Caine believed that spiritual and material degradation of women in the East was 'a canker' in Islam which must be 'rooted out' in order that Islamic nations might

¹⁴⁵ *TWP*, Vol. I, pp.314-15 (Third Book, Chapter I).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Andrew C. Long, *Reading Arabia: British Orientalism in the Age of Mass Publication 1880-1930*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), p.135.

¹⁴⁸ William Le Queux, *Zoraida* (1894; London: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited 1912).

¹⁴⁹ William Le Queux, *The Eye of Istar* (1897; Marston Gate: Amazon Reprints, n.d.).

¹⁵⁰ *TTOTK*, p.99 (Chapter 8).

advance 'with the progressive age'.¹⁵¹ His contact with 'Retrograde Muslim' Egyptians confirmed these views. Whilst staying in Luxor, he visited the home of one of the Arab boys who hung round the hotels in the hope of casual employment by Western tourists, and he was shocked by what he saw. The males of the household occupied a simply furnished but comfortable bedroom. The women occupied a damp room littered with household rubbish which they shared with domestic fowls. Caine also spoke to a Cairene lawyer, another 'Retrograde Muslim', who disapproved of women attending the mosque; young and attractive women were a distraction to male worshippers, and as 'A woman's place was in the home [...] if she had her prayers to say, let her say them there'.¹⁵²

Caine discussed this issue with Islamic reformers. Kassim Ameer Bey advanced the view that polygamy, divorce and seclusion were only endorsed by Mohammed since he was forced to work within existing social structures. Bey believed that Mohammed had recommended the seclusion of women as a means of 'trying to diminish the prevailing laxity of morals in his time', and that there was 'no Koranic warrant' for the practice. When he countenanced divorce, Mohammed 'associated its legality with a condemnation that was almost damnatory' and he allied polygamy 'to conditions which were practically prohibitive'.¹⁵³ In theory, Muslim women had greater rights and freedoms than their Christian counterparts, since:

Islam had from the first laid down definite doctrines concerning the liberty and independence of woman in her legal status, placing her in a position of control over her property and of ability to command divorce, which the lagging law of Christianity had only copied after a lapse of thirteen centuries.¹⁵⁴

Such arguments made a strong impression on Caine, with his predisposition to criticize orthodox religious organisations and his aversion to polygamy and divorce, with the views of Bey on the position of women being expressed in the novel through the character of the reformist Ishmael Ameer.

Many of the comments ascribed to Bey in Caine's account of the interview quoted above also concur with the views of Syed Ameer Ali in *The Spirit of Islam* who

¹⁵¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 4 August 1909.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ *Daily Telegraph*, 4 August 1909.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

also believed that neither Mohammed or Jesus ‘could at once efface society, or obliterate all social and political institutions’¹⁵⁵ and that ‘the less said, the better’ about Christian treatment of woman’.¹⁵⁶ This book, of course, formed a key element of Caine’s research for *The White Prophet* and Caine’s use of such material enabled him to fully recognise the debate around women within Islam itself.

‘All Religions are One’

Caine also uses Ishmael Ameer to advance his views on the common ground shared by the Abrahamic religions. When interviewed by *The British Weekly* Caine maintained that:

Except for our conception of the character and mission of Jesus, there is no fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam. Allowing that the limitation I have mentioned is a great and essential one, I say that in nearly all other respects the two religions are one, the outcome of kindred spiritual forces, making for similar ends.¹⁵⁷

Although Bernard Shaw praised Caine’s vision of ‘a coming reconciliation’ between Christianity and Islam,¹⁵⁸ Caine’s opinions still proved controversial. As Philip Almond points out, attitudes towards Islam had shifted during the nineteenth century. Images of Mohammed as a charlatan or a satanic imposter were being gradually replaced by greater recognition of his sincerity amongst scholars and even, according to Carlyle (perhaps the pre-eminent intervention on Mohammed in the Victorian period), an acknowledgment of his heroic qualities.¹⁵⁹ However, many negative perceptions undoubtedly persisted.

The Christian World accused Caine of seeing Islam ‘through rose coloured spectacles’,¹⁶⁰ and following publication of *The British Weekly* article, its readers expressed their disapproval. These dissenters came from what might generally be described as a committed Christian background. A former missionary’s wife who had witnessed the Armenian massacres of 1896 took issue with Caine’s description of

¹⁵⁵ Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, (1891; London: Methuen, 1967), p.240.

¹⁵⁶ Ali, p.251.

¹⁵⁷ *The British Weekly*, 12 August 1909.

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, p.9.

¹⁵⁹ Philip C. Almond, *Heretic and Hero: Muhammed and the Victorians* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989).

¹⁶⁰ *The Christian World*, n.d.? August 1909.

Islam as ‘a faith capable of adapting itself to the highest cravings of the human soul’, and justified her opinions as follows:

The human soul needs a God of Love, while the god set forth in the Koran is declared to consign to everlasting burnings all Christians who believe in the Divine Sonship of Christ. It is a religion which commands war for the promulgation of its teaching, and justifies at the order of its chief representatives, massacres of the most fanatical and horrible character from time to time, an example of which has just taken place at Adana and its neighbourhood.¹⁶¹

Another correspondent, who worked with the Egyptian General Mission, wrote that after living with Muslims in Egypt and close study of Islam, he had concluded that:

Islam never satisfies. From the beginning to the end of the Koran there is no assurance of salvation [...] As Mr Hall Caine admits, the difference between Christianity and Islam is – Christ. I would go further and say that the fundamental difference is the conception of God. The Moslems confess there is one God, but what a God! We would refer readers to the text-books for light on this subject.¹⁶²

Such criticism did not sway Caine. In ‘Why I Wrote the White Prophet’, he sets out his thoughts on the fundamental unity of the monotheistic religions in some detail. In a section entitled ‘The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind’, he makes explicit his view of religion in general as ‘the unfailing refuge of souls in the midst of the age-long and world-wide empire of brute force’, a means of support and comfort for humanity of whatever faith in times of trouble and of crisis.¹⁶³

Quite apart from a shared monotheism, Caine pointed out that adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all had similar dreams of a peaceful and prosperous ‘golden age’ in the future which would be heralded by the appearance of a charismatic figure. In the case of Judaism, this was the Messiah. In the case of Christianity and Islam, the figure was Jesus Christ - for the former he was the Son of God, for the latter a much-

¹⁶¹ *The British Weekly*, 26 August 1909.

¹⁶² *The British Weekly*, 2 September 1909.

¹⁶³ WIWTWP, p.40.

revered prophet.¹⁶⁴ Ishmael echoes these views in one of his sermons, when he tells the assembled crowd:

Deep in the heart of man, my brothers, is the expectation of a day when the Almighty will send His Messenger to purify and pacify the world and to banish intolerance and wrong. The Jews look for the Messiah, the Christians for the divine man of Judaea, and we that are Moslems for the Mahdi and the Christ.¹⁶⁵

At the beginning of the novel Ishmael hates Christians primarily due to his deep-seated resentment of the British occupation and its Christian officials, blaming them in part for the corruption of Islam. Under the ‘hated bondage of the Christians [...] the whole Mohammedan world was going mad’.¹⁶⁶ However, his brief marriage to a Coptic Christian, Adila, modifies these views. Ishmael hears his wife reciting the Lord’s Prayer, recognises that the two religions have much in common, and in a return to one of Caine’s favourite themes, ‘The Gulf Between Christ and Christianity’,¹⁶⁷ he sees Christianity ‘as it used to be,’ in the original, pure form as preached by Christ, not in the debased, corrupted form practised by the British.¹⁶⁸ Caine is attempting to demonstrate that the way to be a better person is to merge the best elements of Islam and Christianity in portraying an Islamic reformer who embraces elements of Christian teaching.

Ishmael preaches peace and cooperation between the different faiths; ‘We are sons of one Father [...] It is the work of religion to bind men together’.¹⁶⁹ He opposes violence, and in an impassioned speech following the funeral of those killed by the British during the riot following the closure of El Azhar University, Ishmael tells the assembled crowd:

Oppressors have risen against us, O God; but let us not cry to Thee for vengeance against them. They are Christians, and it was a Christian who said ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do’.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ WIWTWP, pp.46-55.

¹⁶⁵ TWP, Vol. II, pp.106-7 (Third Book, Chapter XXVI).

¹⁶⁶ TWP, Vol. I, p.85 (First Book, Chapter XIII).

¹⁶⁷ WIWTWP, p.20.

¹⁶⁸ TWP, Vol. I, p.91 (First Book, Chapter XIV).

¹⁶⁹ TWP, Vol. I, p.100 (First Book, Chapter XV).

¹⁷⁰ TWP, Vol. I, p.233 (Second Book, Chapter XI).

Although Islam is a constant presence within the novel - Ishmael is shown preaching in the mosque and reciting the *Fatihah* as he leads his followers in prayer,¹⁷¹ as the narrative progresses, he undergoes a metamorphosis from an Islamic reformer into a Christ-like figure who unites the three belief systems in preaching an amalgam of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Caine's interest in such a union was first expressed in *The Scapegoat*, through the character Mohammed of Mequinez, a forerunner of Ishmael Ameer. Mohammed, a member of a rich family, gives up his wealth to minister to the poor. Although nominally Moslem, Mohammed's teaching is inclusive, appealing to Moslems and Jews alike, in an expression of Caine's deeply held belief in the fundamental unity of these religions. He and his followers are:

Not dissenters from the Koran, but stricter conformers to it; not Nazarenes and not Jews, yet followers of Jesus in their custom and of Moses in their doctrines.¹⁷²

Mohammed, like Ishmael, makes references to New Testament teaching on non-violence and rejection of material wealth.¹⁷³ However, in this case there are no parallels with Jesus Christ. Instead, there is a strong similarity to another New Testament figure - like John the Baptist, Mohammed wears 'a piece of untanned camel-skin which reached to his knees and was belted about his waist' (Matthew 3:4).¹⁷⁴

In *The White Prophet*, Ishmael's teachings frequently stress the Islamic connections with Christianity, although he is described an *Alim*, a doctor of Koranic divinity, who is entitled to teach anywhere in the Muslim world:

In his preaching he turned forever to the Prophets – the Prophet Abraham, the Prophet Moses, the Prophet Mohammed, and above all, the Prophet Isa. He called Jesus the divine teacher of Judea, one of the great brother souls.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.23 (Third Book, Chapter XIII).

¹⁷² *TS*, p.98 (Chapter IX).

¹⁷³ *TS*, pp.97-99 (Chapter IX).

¹⁷⁴ *TS*, p.227 (Chapter XVII).

¹⁷⁵ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.316 (Third Book, Chapter I).

Ishmael makes frequent references to Christ's words, using phrases and incidents from the New Testament in his preaching. For example, he uses the words of the crucified Christ; 'Father forgive them', when advocating a non-violent response to the closure of El Azhar (Luke 23:24).¹⁷⁶ On another occasion, he recounts the story of the repentant Mary Magdalen washing Christ's feet when his followers criticise his 'intercourse with such notorious sinners' as the women who are 'former paramours of British and Egyptian soldiers at Khartoum'. Ishmael asks them 'Shall I be less charitable than the Lord of the Christians?'¹⁷⁷ In doing this Caine has employed a similar method to that which he uses in *The Scapegoat* – although he imports a great deal of Christological material, he does not seek to overturn or to dissolve the religion in question into Christianity.

Like Christ, Ishmael is not acclaimed as a true prophet by those who knew him as a boy. On his return to Khartoum, the people are disappointed when they recognise him as 'the nephew of old Mahmud and the son of the boat builder',¹⁷⁸ a comment which has obvious parallels with 'Is this not the carpenter's son?' (Matthew 13:55). When Ishmael dispatches one hundred men to spread his message regarding the reform of Islam, he tells them; 'You will take nothing with you on your way, neither purse nor scrip nor second coat', because God will meet their needs. This echoes Matthew 10:10, when Jesus sends his disciples out to preach and instructs them to take 'nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes [. . .].'¹⁷⁹ Later, he enters Cairo on the back of a donkey, just as Christ himself entered Jerusalem.¹⁸⁰ Caine makes this explicit in the text when one of Ishmael's followers thinks that he sees 'in the entrance of Ishmael into Cairo a reproduction of 'the most tragic incident in the life of the Lord of the Christians'.¹⁸¹ It is generally accepted by the crowd who come to welcome him to Cairo that Ishmael is a reincarnation of 'that "divine man of Judea" whom he [Ishmael] had taught them to reverence'.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.284 (Second Book, Chapter XV).

¹⁷⁷ *TWP*, Vol. I, pp.315-16 (Third Book, Chapter I).

¹⁷⁸ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.312 (Third Book, Chapter I).

¹⁷⁹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.237 (Second Book, Chapter IX).

¹⁸⁰ *TWP*, Vol. II, pp.308-9 (Fifth Book, Chapter XII).

¹⁸¹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.309 (Fifth Book, Chapter XII).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

Caine admitted that the likeness to Christ was intentional. In creating Ishmael, he thought it would be ‘interesting to study the character of a man who was making a sincere and natural effort to imitate the life of Jesus’.¹⁸³ However, this aspect of the novel was heavily criticised in reviews. *The Observer* described the character of Ishmael as ‘human and humane, single hearted and inspired’ but claimed that it had been spoiled by a ‘deplorable error of judgement’, namely constant parallels between his life and that of Christ.¹⁸⁴ *The Methodist Times* expressed similar concerns – the common ground between certain aspects of the novel and ‘the Greatest Story in the World’ jarred on the devout feelings of the reader and produced ‘a sentiment of irritation and resentment’.¹⁸⁵ Caine was clearly pushing the limits of what was acceptable as the ‘fictionalising’ of Christ at this point by, in this case, making his Christ figure a Muslim. This whole area was the subject of heated debate in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Whilst such ‘fictionalising’ could give interested readers ‘fresh and challenging perspectives’¹⁸⁶ on the Gospel accounts, accusations of irreverence were often levelled.

In this case the most serious criticism of the Christ-like Ishmael was the fact that he attempted to consummate his marriage to Helena, in what was, according to *The Daily Chronicle*, a scene ‘infinitely more evil in its suggestiveness than the naked truth of the Arabian Nights’.¹⁸⁷ The *Chronicle*’s objections were both religious and racial; the reviewer refers to Ishmael and Helena as a ‘black man’ and a ‘white heroine’. In the novel, Helena expresses revulsion and disgust for Ishmael when he approaches her; ‘Can’t you see that you are hateful and odious to me – that you are a black man and I am a white woman?’¹⁸⁸ Caine may have believed that racial prejudices stemmed from ignorance – ‘the limit of our experiences of life, and of the narrowness of our human sympathies’,¹⁸⁹ but his stance on interracial relationships is more difficult to determine. Ishmael, who expresses Caine’s views on religious issues, is heartbroken by Helena’s rejection, since he believed that where love existed there

¹⁸³ WIWTWP, p.17.

¹⁸⁴ *The Observer*, 15 August 1909.

¹⁸⁵ *The Methodist Times*, 12 August 1909.

¹⁸⁶ Jennifer Stevens, *The Historical Jesus and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p.72.

¹⁸⁷ *The Daily Chronicle*, 12 August 1909.

¹⁸⁸ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.241 (Fifth Book, Chapter II).

¹⁸⁹ ‘Hall Caine at Nelson: The Old and the New Century’, an address delivered by Caine at Nelson Municipal College Prize Giving, *Lancashire Evening Post*, 30 November 1900.

could be no difference of colour or creed.¹⁹⁰ However, it is unlikely that Caine would have deliberately chosen to stir up controversy by endorsing an interracial sexual relationship; as Michael Diamond points out, in Edwardian times Helena would not have been expected to feel any differently towards Ishmael.¹⁹¹

As regards the issue of attributing sexual desire to a Christ-like figure, Caine defended Ishmael's love for Helena:

I did actually intend to do what I have done. I did really mean to say that a man who was as full of the divine spirit as Jesus Himself might, without any lowering of his higher nature, feel the prompting of human love. It was not that I put the character of Jesus lower than my fellow Christians, but that I put human love higher.¹⁹²

Caine explained that another of his intentions in creating the character of Ishmael was to imitate the human side of Christ which would demonstrate that he was not 'a legendary figure in history, a saint to be painted in the stained-glass of church windows'. Instead:

He was still what he was when he was in the flesh, a reality, a man of like passions with ourselves, an elder brother, a guide, a counsellor, a comforter, a great voice calling to us out of the past to live nobly, to die bravely, and to keep up our courage to the last.¹⁹³

Finally, Caine drew further parallels between Ishmael Ameer and Christ in his comparison of Christ's relationship to the Roman authorities in first century Palestine with the situation of Ishmael in British controlled Egypt. The direct relationship between religion and British rule is examined later.

The Myth of Divinity

The emphasis on the human side of Christ is also reflected in another religious issue which preoccupied Caine – how saintly men and, by implication, Christ himself, are accredited with divine status. By the time he wrote *The White Prophet*, Caine had started to have misgivings regarding the divinity of Christ and the veracity of miracles.

¹⁹⁰ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.243 (Fifth Book, Chapter II).

¹⁹¹ Diamond, p.65.

¹⁹² *WIWTWP*, p.23.

¹⁹³ *WIWTWP*, p.18.

At the time, Caine claimed that ‘a good deal of the supernatural which attaches itself to great personages seems to me fictitious and even pernicious’.¹⁹⁴ He believed that ‘Only the greatest of men can escape from the evil effects of it’; Caine praised Mohammed’s insistence that he was ‘but a man [...] in the face of all temptations to allow himself to be made a god’.¹⁹⁵ In his *Life of Christ*, published posthumously in 1938, Caine expresses the view that many of the miracles attributed to Jesus were the ‘inventions of a later age than that of the apostles, fabricated to attract new converts and silence objectors’.¹⁹⁶

Caine claimed that belief in the miraculous was not necessary for his kind of Christianity:

What is it to me, whether, in the little village of Bethany, Jesus did or did not raise to life one poor dead body, when I know that, in the centuries since, He has raised to life millions of dead souls?¹⁹⁷

Indeed, several years after his death Caine’s eldest son, Ralph, confirmed his father’s scepticism regarding Christ’s divinity; ‘My father regarded Christ as a man, not a divine creature [...] the finest type of man who lived’.¹⁹⁸

In *The White Prophet*, an aura of divinity gathers around Ishmael because of the enthusiasm of his followers, who want to believe that he possesses supernatural powers. Caine took the view that such powers were ascribed to exceptional individuals because human beings found it difficult to attribute ‘the great movements that affect the world’ to men of ordinary passions.¹⁹⁹ Initially, Ishmael is acclaimed as an inspired preacher and people flock in thousands ‘to drink of the river of his words’,²⁰⁰ listening eagerly to his predictions of ‘a better and happier day’.²⁰¹ They begin to see him as a man sent of God, to call him ‘Master’, and to speak of him as the ‘White Prophet’.²⁰² Within the novel, Helena notices that when Ishmael’s followers acclaim him as the

¹⁹⁴ WIWTWP, p.23

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Life of Christ* (London: Collins Publishers, 1938), p.1084.

¹⁹⁷ WIWTWP, pp.23-24.

¹⁹⁸ *Daily Herald*, 7 October 1938.

¹⁹⁹ TWP, Vol. II, p.381 (Epilogue).

²⁰⁰ TWP, Vol. I, p.317 (Third Book, Chapter II).

²⁰¹ TWP, Vol. I, p.320 (Third Book, Chapter II).

²⁰² TWP, Vol. I, p.317 (Third Book, Chapter II).

Guided One, the Deliverer and even the Lord Isa ‘he is not reproving them’.²⁰³ Gordon sees that Ishmael’s spiritual ecstasy has reached:

A point not far removed from madness; that his faith in divine guidance, divine guardianship, divine intervention had become an absolute obsession.²⁰⁴

Miracles are attributed to Ishmael. During the pilgrimage to Cairo, he is said to have commanded a sandstorm to pass over the heads of the people without touching them, and produced a well of ice cold water from a rock.²⁰⁵ Helena witnesses an incident in which Ishmael revives a young girl, supposedly dead from sunstroke, but who may well have simply been unconscious.²⁰⁶ Afterwards, Helena comments that; ‘the “divine” atmosphere that is gathering around [Ishmael] is positively frightening’.²⁰⁷

However, Ishmael succumbs only temporarily to the myth of his own divinity and finally recognises his human frailty. His plans for a non-violent takeover of power in which the native Egyptian soldiers simply lay down their weapons are betrayed by Helena. Although Ishmael succeeds in entering Cairo peacefully with his followers, he is a disappointed man, who considers the failure of the mission to be a rebuke from the Almighty for his presumptuous behaviour in considering himself to be the mouthpiece of God. In a brief comment on *The White Prophet* the historian, Norman Daniel, believed that Caine’s approach to this character was ‘remarkable’. Referring to Ishmael’s ‘Christian and liberal religiosity’ Daniel stated that the climax of Ishmael’s mission lay in the fact that he ultimately rejected the fanaticism of his followers.²⁰⁸

In the novel’s epilogue, Caine shows how Ishmael’s influence and his perceived divinity persist over time, giving rise to a new sect within Islam. He retains the ‘boundless affection’ of those who came into immediate contact with him; Black Zog, Ishmael’s most faithful follower, claims that he witnessed his ascent to heaven ‘in a blinding whirlwind of celestial light, a flight of angels carrying him away’.²⁰⁹ The number of ‘miracles’ accredited to Ishmael increases – ‘serious minded sheikhs

²⁰³ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.170 (Fourth Book, Chapter III).

²⁰⁴ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.61 (Third Book, Chapter XX).

²⁰⁵ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.151 (Fourth Book, Chapter VI).

²⁰⁶ *TWP*, Vol. II, pp.155-57 (Fourth Book, Chapter III).

²⁰⁷ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.150 (Fourth Book, Chapter VI).

²⁰⁸ Daniel, p.448.

²⁰⁹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.378 (Epilogue).

repeat his genealogy which includes his virgin birth'.²¹⁰ Myths are constructed around his life, some of which are similar to events recorded in the Christian Gospels. For example, Ishmael and his mother are said to have received a visit from three Arabian Sheikhs who 'pay reverence' to the pair shortly after his birth.²¹¹ Collections of Ishmael's sayings are gathered, some authentic, others borrowed from the Christian gospels, but all are 'deeply treasured' by his followers. Nearly all agree 'that there was an element of the supernatural about him'.²¹²

As has been seen, Caine also explored the way the myth of divinity grew around a holy man in *The Christian*, albeit in less depth than in *The White Prophet*. Both John Storm and Ishmael Ameer are religious reformers with enthusiastic followers who credit them with divine powers – and ultimately both men are discredited and disillusioned. Whilst Ishmael is portrayed as an enlightened picture of a Moslem by contemporary standards, Caine is also attempting to produce a synthesis of the three largest monotheistic religions, and express his belief in their fundamental unity. He made this point explicitly both in the 'Only One Religion' section of the 'Why I Wrote the White Prophet' pamphlet, and also in an article entitled 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind' printed in the Congregationalist newspaper *The Christian Commonwealth*:

Yes, it is certainly true that in spite of differences of dogma the religions are all one religion, and at the great and tragic moments of life and death, the voice of the human soul is always the same voice.²¹³

The novel ends on a pessimistic note, with Ishmael disappearing into obscurity, having achieved little. He set out to reform Islam, returning it to the spirit in which Mohammed founded it, but his preaching gives rise to a new Islamic sect which will eventually acquire the trappings of organised religion and, by implication, become corrupted over time. However, there is a quiet nobility in Ishmael's actions – he has made a sincere attempt to purge Islam of its perceived shortcomings and before withdrawing into the desert he exhorts his followers to live in peace and charity.

²¹⁰ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.379 (Epilogue).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *TWP*, Vol. II, p.381 (Epilogue).

²¹³ *WIWTWP*, pp.43-46; 'The Spiritual Brotherhood of Mankind', *The Christian Commonwealth*, 20 October 1909.

Ishmael's sayings are collected and recorded, theologians discuss the inner significance of words attributed to him, and:

A large and gorgeous mosque will be built in Ishmael's honour, and [...] he who loved best to worship in that temple of the open desert whereof the dome is the sky, he who cared so little about dogmatic theology that he never wrote a line, may, by the wild irony of fate, become the founder of a sect in Islam, which will teach everything he fought against and practice everything he condemned.²¹⁴

All of this suggests that although Caine hoped for reform of organised religions, he was unable to reconcile his belief in individualist spirituality with the social role of religion: 'All religions began in poverty and ended in corruption'.²¹⁵

Ishmael's mission also fails in a quite different sense. His hopes for some form of unity between Christianity and Islam, and for the narrowing of the 'gulf between Christ and Christianity' come to nothing in terms of influencing the materialistic West. He is quickly forgotten by Europeans – historians dismiss the pilgrimage to Cairo 'in five lines of a section of a book dealing with "Mahdiism and Sedition in the Soudan"'.²¹⁶ Caine believed that for all its 'civilisation and Christianity' the West was unable to recognise that the spiritual was more important in 'sustaining its steps' than the material which could be measured and quantified. Thus, it was difficult to imagine any welcome in Western cities for one who taught that 'property beyond the proper needs of human life was pillage'.²¹⁷ The thought of one who held such views 'forcing his way' into the cathedrals and parliaments of Western cities 'where Archbishops officiate in embroidered copes' was laughable, especially if the individual was a simple desert Arab, who wore sandals and a turban and ate with his hands.²¹⁸ The parallels with Christ are obvious – and thus in the closing paragraphs, Caine returns to issues examined earlier in this novel and elsewhere. 'The distorted image [of Christianity] which the centuries have created' persists in archbishops and statesmen who pay lip service to Christianity but disregard the teachings of its founder²¹⁹ - the

²¹⁴ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.380 (Epilogue).

²¹⁵ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.105 (Third Book, Chapter XXVI).

²¹⁶ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.382 (Epilogue).

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *TWP*, Vol. II, p.382 (Epilogue).

gulf between Christ and Christianity shows no signs of narrowing and Western nations have absorbed none of the Islamic spirituality which Caine respected so much. Ironically, this leaves spontaneous and individualist demonstrations of Islamic faith as, in Caine's view, a greater manifestation of Christianity than Christianity itself.

'John Bull as Pontius Pilate'²²⁰

The intentional parallels between Ishmael Ameer and Jesus Christ open the way for consideration of a major issue within the novel which has roots in both religion and politics. This is Caine's perception of the parallels between the position of the British administration in Egypt and that of the Roman Empire in Palestine. Caine explained these parallels as follows:

In order to understand the relation of British governments abroad to alien races professing other religions it is necessary to remember the political situation. In Egypt the position of England is roughly and approximately that which the Roman Empire occupied in Palestine at the time of Christ. We have our Consul-General, whose powers are equivalent to those of the procurator, Pontius Pilate. The Egyptians have their sacred law, which is about equal in rights and responsibilities to the law of the Jews. As the Sanhedrin had powers that were independent of the Roman courts so Makhamah Sharayiah has powers that are independent of the civil courts we control. And as Caiaphas was the head and high priest of the Jewish courts, so the Grand Cadi is the head and chief judge of the Moslem courts, and as the representative of the Sultan of Turkey (in his character of Caliph of Islam), he is beyond our jurisdiction.²²¹

He described the situation in Judea two thousand years ago as a struggle between the poor synagogue and the rich temple, that is, the prophets who represented the common people and the high priests and sacramentalists. Caine asserted that Jesus cared nothing for Caesar: 'What really concerned him was the spiritual welfare of the people and hypocrisy of the high priests and scribes'. Jealous and resentful of the influence he exerted over the ordinary people, the high priests appealed to the Roman authorities, claiming that Jesus was guilty of sedition and treason.²²² Caine claimed that Christ

²²⁰ WIWTWP, p.35.

²²¹ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

²²² WIWTWP, pp.33-34.

could not have been put to death without the Roman presence in Judea; the common people revered him and without Roman support, the ‘old Jewish party’ headed by the high priests was not sufficiently powerful to have Jesus prosecuted and killed.²²³

So, although *The White Prophet* is set in Egypt and the Sudan and deals with Islam, Caine indicates that wherever the British Empire seized the territory of the people of another faith, it was in danger of assuming the role of Pontius Pilate. In Egypt, and in Caine’s novel, the Grand Cadi and the Ulema assume the positions of Caiaphas and the Council of the Sanhedrin. When a religious reformer like Jesus Christ or Ishmael Ameer appears as a potential rival for their supremacy, he is denounced to the occupying authorities who are persuaded to listen to stories of sedition and political intrigue, resulting in the removal of the reformer who threatens the religious status quo.

Caine outlined similarities between Roman rule in Palestine and the British Administration of Egypt in the opening chapters of *The White Prophet*, when Ishmael makes his appearance as ‘a new planet [...] in the firmament’.²²⁴ Gordon Lord is the first character to recognise the parallels. He understands that the real betrayer of Christ was not Judas, who was ‘only the catspaw’, but the High Priest Caiaphas:

He was the head of the bad system which Christ came to wipe out, and he saw that if he did not destroy Jesus, Jesus would destroy him. What did he do? He went to the Governor, the Consul-General of the Roman Occupation and said ‘This man is setting himself up against Caesar. If you let him go, you are not Caesar’s friend.’²²⁵

When Gordon sees the Grand Cadi leaving the Consul-General’s residence, he thinks of Caiaphas; ‘he did not know why – that just so must have Caiaphas the high priest has looked when he came out of Pilate’s judgement hall’.²²⁶ The Cadi has, in fact, visited Lord Nuneham to give false reports of Ishmael’s teaching and mission, and to warn the Consul-General that Ishmael’s activities ‘will be the death of the rule of England in Egypt’ if left unchecked.²²⁷ Gordon tells his father that if the Chancellor

²²³ WIWTWP, p.35.

²²⁴ TWP, Vol. I, p.34 (First Book, Chapter IV).

²²⁵ TWP, Vol. I, p.75 (First Book, Chapter X).

²²⁶ TWP, Vol. I, p.36 (First Book, Chapter V).

²²⁷ TWP, Vol. I, p.76 (First Book, Chapter X).

of El Azhar is correct in his assertion that Ishmael's intentions are peaceful, then 'We [the British] shall be doing something that bears an ugly resemblance to what the Romans did in Palestine'.²²⁸

Sir Reginald Manning, the Sirdar of the Sudan, also speculates whether Britain, a 'Christian country', is in danger of repeating the error of the Roman Empire in Palestine two thousand years ago, in trying to suppress moral forces by physical strength. However, he soon dismisses his idea as the grotesque comparison of an 'olive faced Arab' with Jesus Christ.²²⁹

Shaw believed that Caine had correctly identified the similarities between the position of the British in Egypt and that of the Romans in Palestine regarding the religion of their subject peoples:

The situation of Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas is constantly and inevitably reproduced whenever we seize a foreign territory as Rome seized Judaea [...] When an original religious genius arises – Jesus, Mahomet, Savonarola or St Clare – his first attack is on the Temple, and whilst the people make him the leader of their eternal revolt against priestly conspiracy, the priests accuse him of political conspiracy, and incite the military authorities to put him down with fire or sword.²³⁰

The *Review of Reviews* criticised Caine. The article pointed out that in the novel his sympathies lay entirely with Gordon Lord and against the 'Cadi-dictated policy of the Proconsul'. However, following publication Caine 'executed a complete somersault' in his views, defending Lord Nuneham's actions regarding Ishmael in a series of articles for the daily and weekly press in which he claimed that 'All our Proconsuls [...] must be Pontius Pilates; it is a necessity of their situation'.²³¹ However, Caine came to the conclusion that representatives of the British Empire could not act otherwise – their main concern was 'to preserve law and order and the over-lordship of Great Britain'.²³² They were led to believe exaggerated stories 'of

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ *TWP*, Vol. I, p.346 (Third Book, Chapter V).

²³⁰ Shaw, pp.7-8.

²³¹ *The Review of Reviews*, September 1909.

²³² *WIWTWP*, p.36.

sedition, of widespread conspiracy, of political outrage'²³³ by the religious hierarchy who wished to eliminate reformers, and if the reformer in question claimed to be divine – or was regarded as such by his followers, the British had little option but to dispose of him:

There can be only one authority at one time in any country, and if the people believe they have the Messenger of God among them, they are not going to obey the servants of the State.²³⁴

Caine argued that if Jesus Christ had not died on the cross, but were to reappear in the Sudan:

Being hailed by the same cries going into Khartoum as greeted Him on going into Jerusalem, and making the same replies when challenged at His trial, the Christian government of the Soudan could not possibly escape from the necessity of putting him to death.²³⁵

Hence Nuneham's reaction to the news that Ishmael is the 'new Mahdi'.

Caine sympathised with Pilate's predicament, and suggested that he would like to have saved Jesus. As an enlightened Roman, Pilate would have found the Jewish law 'behind the age' and would have also been 'deeply impressed' by Christ's calm and dignified behaviour, but he had to do his duty as 'the representative of Tiberius'.²³⁶ However, Caine had misgivings about adopting a Pilate-like stance; he believed that the real welfare of a country rested in its religion and thus in acquiescing with the religious authorities, whether the Cadi or Caiaphas, in the persecution of a religious reformer, an occupying power suppressed the highest aspirations of that religion and adversely affected the moral well-being of the people.²³⁷

Caine sparked more controversy when he produced a series of articles justifying his views on 'John Bull as Pontius Pilate', in which he also suggested that Christian missionaries should not attempt to proselytize in Egypt and the Sudan. In the case of Egypt:

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

²³⁷ Ibid.

I consider it a most dangerous thing to try and implant another religion in the hearts and minds of a people that is already fervidly religious. Do you not realise that in doing so you are sowing the seeds of a Holy War?²³⁸

As regards the Sudan, Caine warned of the dangers of ‘attempting to Christianize a Muslim people in a backward and semi-civilized country, populated by tribes which have a hundred causes of jealousy, a thousand temptations to strife’.²³⁹ If many of the tribes chose to remain within the Islamic faith the potential for tension, discord and ultimately conflict was increased.

Unsurprisingly, Caine’s views drew criticism. *The Christian World* believed that Caine was:

[...] so in love with Mohammedanism that he would check, if not suppress, Christian missionary propagandism [...] Mohammedanism has no scruples about propagandism. It is sending its emissaries among all the races of Africa. It is entitled to a fair field in competition with Christianity, but not to a monopoly, and the future of Africa would be blighted but for the hope and regenerating power to be given to it by the Christian religion.²⁴⁰

J.N. Farquhar, a former resident of Calcutta whose status is unknown, wrote to *The British Weekly* in August 1909 to say that Caine’s fears were groundless and that the dangers were ‘overestimated’. Taking India as an example, he pointed out that the East India Company’s predictions of disaster on admitting Christian missionaries had proved false. He believed that the missionaries had a beneficial effect in paving the way for Government introduction of ‘modern methods for the betterment of the country and the people’. For him, the British Administration in Egypt was capable of coping with any unrest, and the Government wronged the people if Christianity was excluded; ‘a man had the right to think, to enquire, to change his religion if he chose to do so’.²⁴¹ Farquhar argued that the admission of Christianity helped ‘laggard’ subject people ‘to take their rightful place among the nations’ and he concluded that

²³⁸ Blathwayt, *Great Thoughts*, 6 November 1909, p.88.

²³⁹ *The British Weekly*, 12 August 1909; *New York Herald*, 14 November 1909.

²⁴⁰ *The Christian World*, n.d. August 1909.

²⁴¹ *The British Weekly*, 16 August 1909.

every Asian religion had experienced cleansing revival ‘in order to be able to hold its own against the cross’.²⁴²

Conclusion

The White Prophet stands apart from other contemporary novels by popular authors dealing with the British occupation of Egypt, and featuring religious and political tensions between a Christian regime and Muslim subjects. It is not a polemic demonstrating the inability of the Egyptians (and by implication, other ‘subject peoples’) to govern themselves, as with Sladen’s *The Tragedy of the Pyramids*, and for Caine, Islam was clearly not synonymous with anti-British nationalism or fanaticism. Indeed, Caine’s treatment of Islam is more balanced than that of his fellow authors; he respects the religiosity of the Muslim population which the ‘lukewarm’ British could not understand. For Sladen or even Conan Doyle, such devotion equated to fanaticism. Caine also undertook serious research into Islamic theology and beliefs. Although he strongly disapproved of both polygamy and divorce as sanctioned by the Koran, he supported reformers such as Kassim Bey, who were willing to reassess the position of Muslim women. However, he was most aware of common ground shared by Christianity and Islam as monotheistic religions, and recognised that Muslims revered and respected Jesus Christ, albeit as a Prophet rather than the Son of God.

In a sense, because of its interest in Islam, *The White Prophet* sees Caine adopt an even more radical take on the religious issues examined throughout his fictional oeuvre. The criticism of religion in its orthodox forms supported by an alliance with the State, non-sectarianism, the possibility of a union of the Abrahamic religions, the growth of the myth of divinity around holy men, and the difficulties of that position are all present and correct here, and thus *The White Prophet* can be considered as the definitive embodiment of Caine’s religious world view.

²⁴² Ibid.

Conclusion

My research has sought to demonstrate that Caine was more than a commercially successful writer of limited ability. It cannot be disputed that the plots of his novels are sensational, and were indeed popular with the reading public; however, they can be seen to work on more than one level. Caine was a deeply religious man with forthright opinions on a wide range of contemporary religious, and to a lesser degree, political issues. His novels reflect these religious convictions; especially his non-sectarianism, aversion to orthodox religious systems and belief in the fundamental unity of all religions. Hence to dismiss Caine purely as an author of best-selling melodramas is to overlook his importance in establishing a link between religious questions at the end of the nineteenth century and commercially successful and popular fiction, this being most vividly demonstrated by the widespread use of his novels as subject matter for sermons across denominations.

Caine's treatment of religious issues in his novels raises several often-unanswered questions; such as the potential for non-sectarianism to become an alternative sect, and the need for some form of organised religious structure to avoid endless fragmentation and schism. Caine's engagement with specific religious debates of his time including the role of the Churches in combating poverty and the Roman Catholic doctrines of papal infallibility, temporality and confession, further demonstrates that although he successfully exploited the market for fiction with a moral or religious purpose, his populism and commercial success did not prevent him also being an author with a more widely informed interest. Inevitably, given his close involvement in both domestic and international political matters, this interest extended into the interrelationship between religion, economics and politics

Caine took his profession seriously, viewing fiction as a tool of moral and religious instruction and he carefully researched background material for each of his novels as evidenced by his extended visits to Rome, Egypt and the Sudan prior to writing *The Eternal City* and *The White Prophet*. His careful research helped produce a sensitive and balanced consideration of the key religious issues which he tackled. In particular, this added reassurance and gravitas for those in positions of power and authority who were using his novels to supplement their arguments or make a specific point.

However, while his drama and fiction were what made his reputation (and earned him his income), research in the unique and significant body of archival material held at the Manx Museum has revealed that there are aspects of Caine, the man and the novelist, which offer potential for further research. One such topic is his *Life of Christ*, a project which he abandoned whilst writing fiction but returned to in later life. Comprising some 1250 pages of text, even after extensive editing, it reveals the nature of his views on issues such as the divinity of Christ and the veracity of miracles. His achievement in writing the *Life* is ripe for consideration in the context of the many hundreds of such 'Lives' which had been produced since the mid-Victorian period. In contrast, other subjects which suggest themselves indicate the breadth of his engagement with topics beyond religion, including his political career and the development of his socialist views, his involvement with the Zionist movement, and his role in the Great War, including his preparatory work in paving the way for the establishment of the League of Nations.

Nevertheless, across the breadth of Caine's interests and social and political involvement, religion remained a key motivating force. It is therefore right that this study should focus on the development of Caine's religiosity alongside his views on novel writing. Both *The Manxman* and *The Master of Man* are morality tales, the product of his Nonconformist upbringing, which led him to view fiction not solely as entertainment, but also as a powerful force for teaching moral and religious principles. Caine maintained that the Churches ought to harness the potential of both the novel and drama if 'the pulpit was to hold its own' at a time when there were so many other 'vehicles of expression'.¹ The novelist should assume the role of a 'temporal providence' and ensure that virtue was victorious and wrongdoing never went unpunished.² His unflattering portrayal of Manx Primitive Methodists reflects his resentment at their inability to appreciate his views concerning the important role of fiction in revealing religious truths, providing further proof of his elevated concept of his chosen profession.

Caine sought to enact his beliefs concerning the social and political power of fiction in *The Christian*. Here he examines the role of the Churches in alleviating

¹ 'Hall Caine on The Modern Pulpit', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 September 1897.

² 'Hall Caine on Novels': A Lecture to the Nineteenth Century Club, *The New York Times*, 14 November 1895.

poverty in the city specifically concentrating on the Anglican Church. The contemporary and realistic ‘feel’ of this novel is reinforced by the fact that Caine openly admitted that he had based the character of John Storm on two real life clergymen, Fathers James Adderley and Arthur Osborne Jay. However, as I have shown, the unacknowledged influence of Hugh Price Hughes significantly impacted on that character as well. *The Christian* directly addresses a key issue of interest during the 1890s in its examination of the work of a slum priest, linking it to other novels such as *Stephen Remarx*, *A Princess of the Gutter* and *A Child of The Jago* which were also published during that period and which feature similar clerical characters. However, it is in *The Christian* that we find Caine’s examination of wider religious issues, including a brief consideration of Christian Socialism, as he looks at the role which Christian ethics might play in the formulation of government policies.

The application of Christian ethics to the government of nations is more fully developed in Chapter Three of this thesis, when Caine considers the potential of a reformed Catholic Church in which the Pontiff abandons his temporal claims to apply Christian principles to government and international relations and bring about European unity with a federation of states. His measured, balanced criticism of the Roman Catholic doctrines reflects his scrupulous research for the novel, and stands in marked contrast to the more biased treatment of Catholicism by other writers – as reflected in my detailed and direct comparative analysis of *The Eternal City* with Marie Corelli’s *The Master Christian*.

Finally, the thesis has moved beyond the major Christian denominations to consider Caine’s treatment of Judaism and Islam in *The Scapegoat* and *The White Prophet*. The former was researched, written and published against a background of growing anti-Semitism, and whilst his original intentions in writing *The Scapegoat* might have been otherwise, the character of Israel Ben Oriel was acclaimed as a ‘heroic Jew’ by many inside and outside of the Jewish community. Furthermore, Caine’s visit to Russia instigated because of his perceived sympathy towards Judaism expressed in *The Scapegoat* inspired his interest in, and further involvement with, the Zionist movement. The novel is also remarkable for its expression of Caine’s belief in the basic unity of the Abrahamic religions which was more fully developed in *The White Prophet*. This was his least commercially successful and most controversial novel, due to his perceived criticism of British policy towards Islam and Britain’s Muslim

‘subjects’ in Egypt. The novel unites several areas of interest to Caine - religious unity, the shortcomings of organised religion, and the ‘myth’ of divinity. Caine’s more sensitive treatment of Islam stands out against the dismissive approach adopted by authors such as Conan Doyle and Sladen, for whom the faith was synonymous with violence, ignorance and fanaticism.

Taken as a whole, my thesis has reassessed Caine for a new readership and provides a reminder of the powerful role popular novels and drama once had in religious debate. It is inaccurate to regard Caine as a producer of formulaic melodramas – in three of the novels selected for my research, *The Christian*, *The Eternal City* and *The White Prophet*, Caine shows himself capable of seriously engaging with substantial religious issues alongside some of the significant political concerns of his day. As I have revealed Caine is not always a likeable figure, and he is certainly not a straightforward one, but he is a striking character; the prominent literary figure on the Isle of Man and, as such, he deserves the consideration offered throughout this work.

Appendix

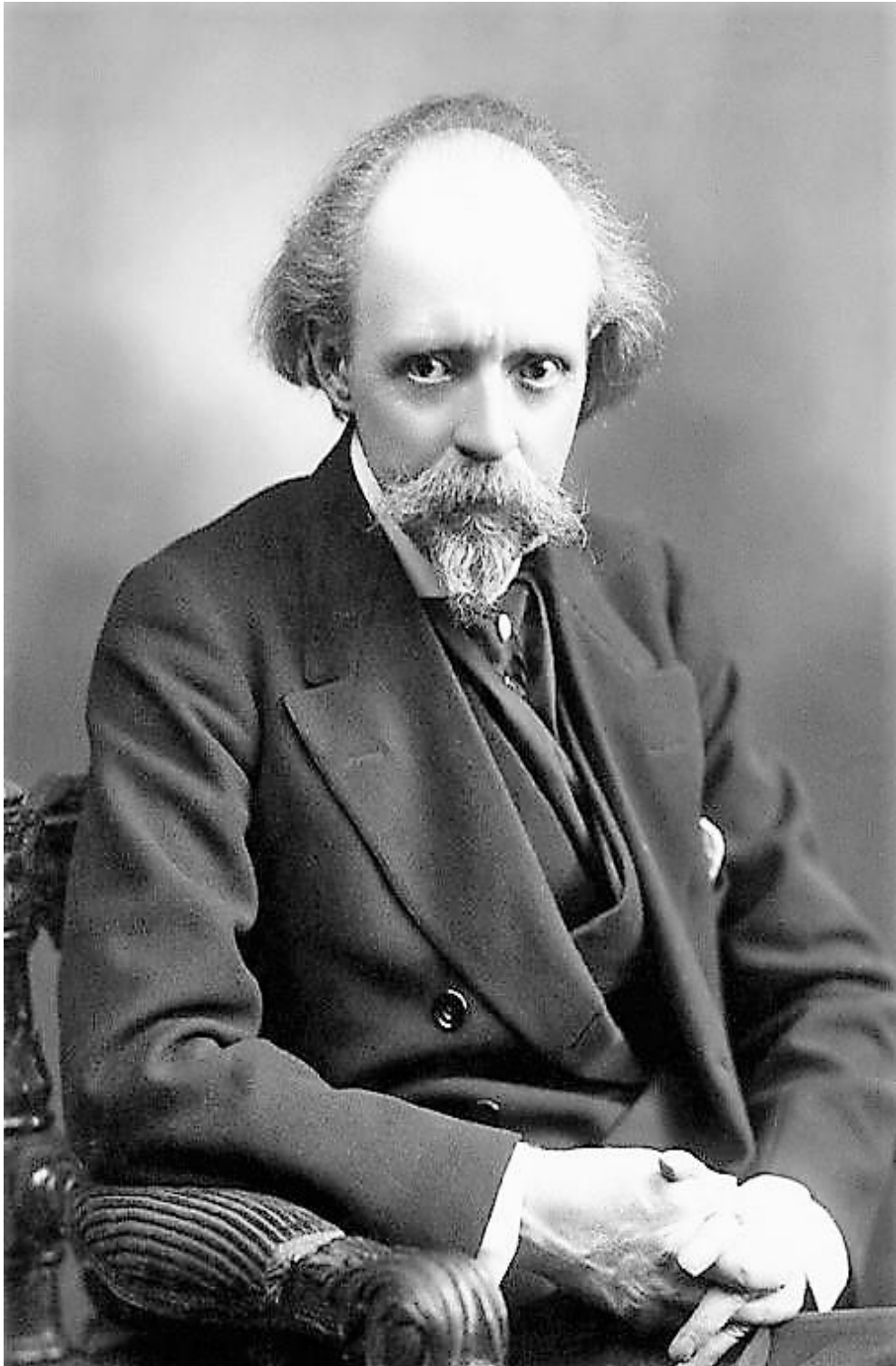


Figure 1 - Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine K.G.B. (1853-1931)

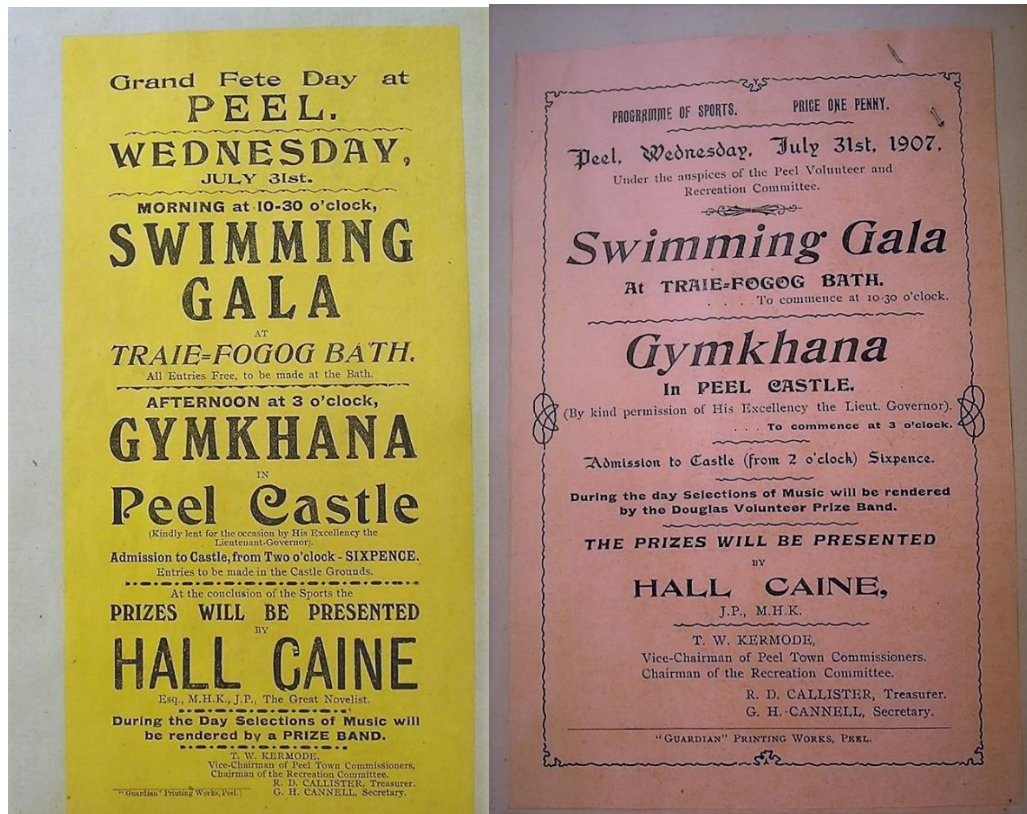


Figure 2 – Publicity posters for a Grand Fete Day 31 July 1894 and a Sports Day 31 July 1907 both held in Peel with prizes presented by the author, contained within the Hall Caine Papers

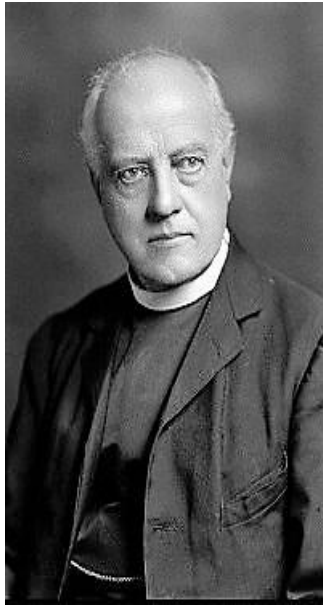


Figure 3 -
Father James Granville Adderley
(1861-1942)



Figure 4 -
Father Arthur Osborne Jay
(1858–1945): Vicar of Holy
Trinity Church, Shoreditch
1886-1921

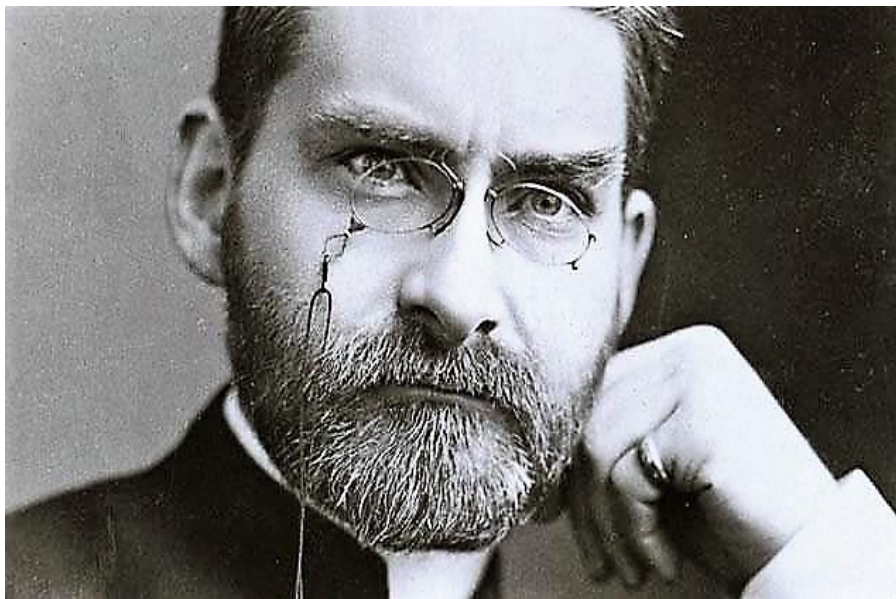


Figure 5 - Reverend Hugh Price Hughes (1847–1902): Founder and first
Superintendent of the West London Mission 1887-1902

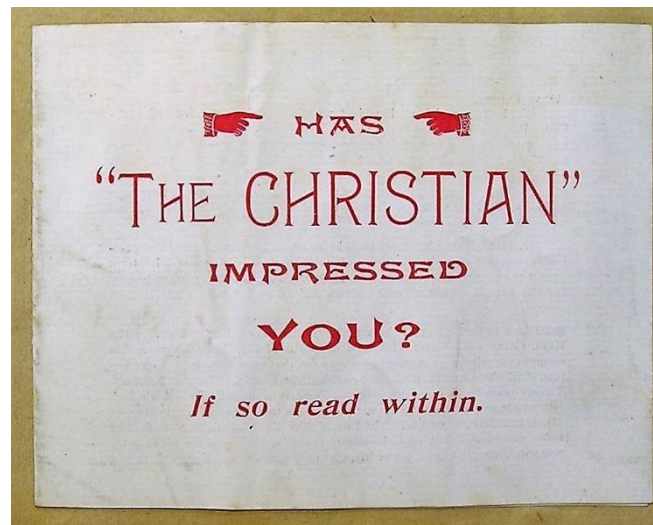


Figure 6 – Katherine Price Hughes: cover from a leaflet detailing the work of the West London Mission distributed at the opening of *The Christian* play at the Lyceum Theatre in 1907, contained within the Hall Caine Papers

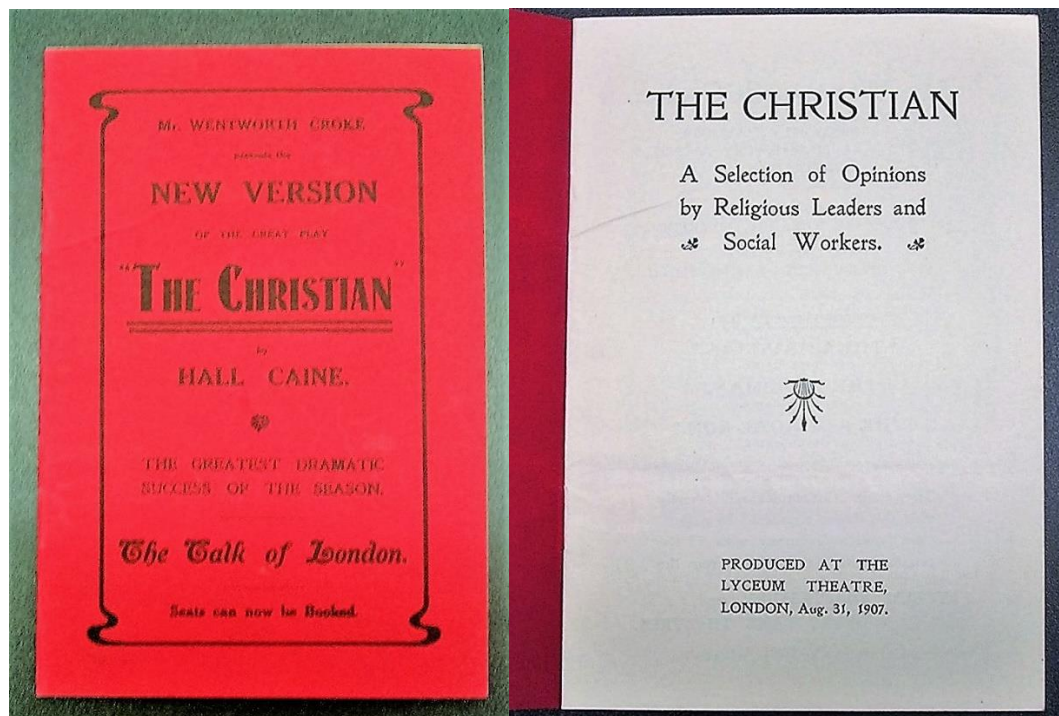


Figure 7 – ‘*The Christian: A selection of Opinions by Religious Leaders and Social Workers*’, produced at the Lyceum Theatre, contained within the Hall Caine Papers



Figure 8 - Pope Pius IX (1792-1878), reigned 1846-1878

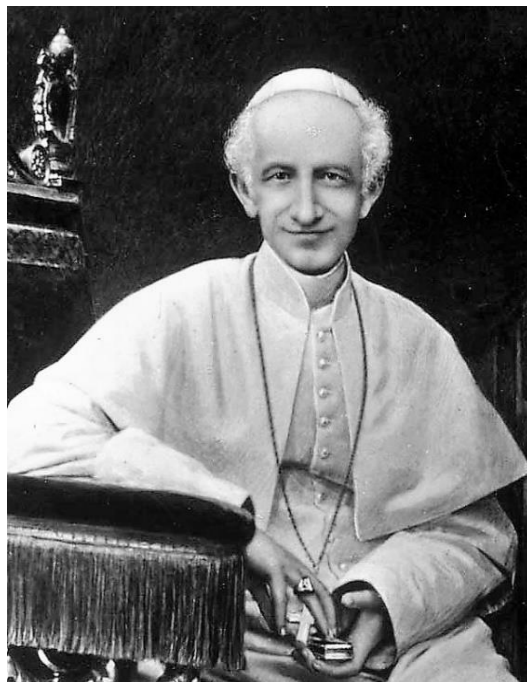


Figure 9 - Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903), reigned 1878-1903



Figure 10 – Rabbi Hermann Adler (1839-1911): Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire 1891-1911

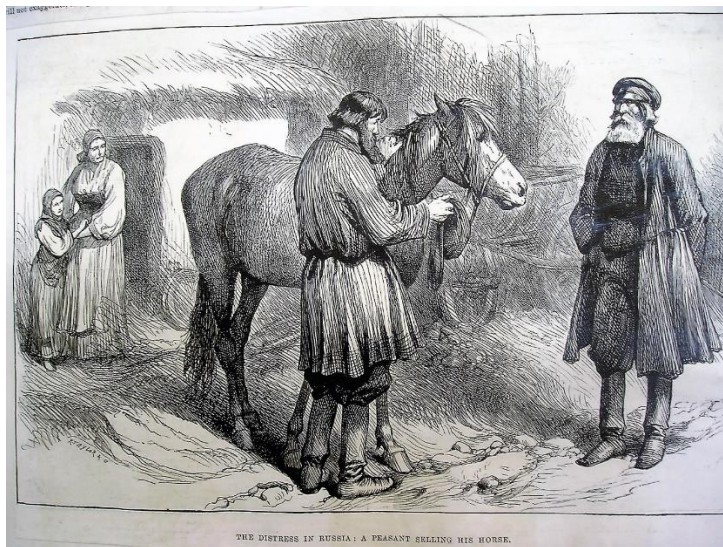


Figure 11 - The distress in Russia: a peasant selling a horse (*Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1891), from an article publicising Caine's visit to Russia



Figure 12 – Lord Cromer (1841-1917): British Consul General of Egypt 1882-1907

CAINE IN EGYPT. By Charles Harrison.



Figure 13 – Caine in Egypt, a caricature by Charles Harrison (*The Tatler*, 19 February 1908) published coincident with his research visits for *The White Prophet*

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